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THE
THREE SPANIARDS.

A ROMANCE.

BY GEORGE WALKER,

Author of the Vagabond, &c. &c.

. "Art thou any thing?
Art thou some god, some angel, or some devil,
That mak'st my blood cold, and my hair to stand?
Speak to me, what art thou!"—*Julius Cæsar*,

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

EXETER:

J. C. GERRISH, PUBLISHER.

1832.



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THE THREE SPANIARDS.

CHAPTER I.

Dark were his brows, and gloomy to the sight like clouds—His eyes like meteors of the night.

Ossian.

THE Duke D'Alcantary gave a splendid entertainment at his palace in Madrid, on occasion of a public exhibition, to which all the nobility and gentry were invited, in the true spirit of Castilian magnificence and hospitality. Madrid scarcely before had witnessed so great an assemblage of beauty; and no person of note was absent.

The night was beautiful and mild, such as the spring produces when warming into summer, and the gentle airs, that passed over a delightful garden, wafted a thousand perfumes through the gauze lattices which surrounded the large saloon, where the dancers were performing. The brilliance of dress shone amidst a blaze of tapers; and large Venetian mirrors reflected and multiplied the various groups, animated with ever changing motions with a sort of magic elegance; while the lively music of the orchestra awakened joy, and gave birth to pleasure in the coldest heart.

In the midst of this festivity a stranger entered, conducting a young lady, whose modesty appeared to shrink from the enquiring gaze of so numerous an assembly. The stranger appeared a man of near sixty, unbent by the pressure of time; his features were darkened by an heavy gloom which

hung upon his brow. No smile illuminated his countenance as he entered the temple of gaiety; and, while he walked solemnly forward to the upper end, every eye bent upon him, and every tongue inquired who he could be.

The young Marquis De los Velos was conversing with the Marquis Albert de Denia, when these interesting strangers entered. The Marquis of Denia started and turned pale as the strangers advanced; but recovering himself, he attended with a smile to the observations of his friend.

"What a charming lady!" said the Marquis de los Velos; "do you observe the elegance of her form, the grace of her manner, and the modesty expressed in blushes on her countenance."—"My dear Antonio," replied the Marquis, "do you pretend so much skill in female charms, as to form a judgment at this distance, and from a side view of the lady? Her veil half conceals her face; and you can but guess at what remains unseen."

The lady, as if she had overheard this discourse, and was willing to comply with the curiosity of the gentlemen, turned her veil aside, and stealing a timid glance round the company, her eyes rested a moment on the two friends, and a visible confusion betrayed some secret emotion. "Now, my friend," said the Marquis de los Velos, "now are you satisfied with my judgment? What expressive eyes, what sensibility of soul do they betray. Did you mark that charming smile, when her eyes turned upon me? what tenderness did it not speak!"

"I know not," replied the Marquis, coolly, "what intelligence there may be between you, for me I did not mark the smile you mention."

"Ha! ha!" returned Antonio laughing, "you are jealous, Marquis. But observe, I speak first for her favour."—"It is what I shall not dispute with you," replied the Marquis of Denia, with a serious air; "she is, I believe, already engaged."

"Engaged, how!" cried Antonio, with emo-

tion. "Tell me to whom, and I will instantly dispatch him."—"Your intentions are excellent," replied the Marquis, preserving his gravity; "but your willingness to fight for the lady will not be rewarded:—your rival is infinitely superior to you—his claims are imperious, and undeniable—and no power on earth can resist them."—"You jest, Marquis," replied Antonio. "I wish I could," said his friend, with a sigh; "you will find what I say literally true:—it is an intelligence I learned not many hours since."—"Then you know her," cried Antonio, with impatience; "tell me every thing about her. Who is she? who is this rival? Where am I to find him?—introduce me to their acquaintance." "Patience!" cried the Marquis of Denia, "I dare not introduce myself. Nothing can be more strange to me, than to see that gloomy Cavalier in this scene of joy; his countenance is sufficient to damp the evenings entertainment." "You torture me," exclaimed Antonio; "Why do you trifle with me thus?" "I trifle with you!" replied the Marquis; "my dear friend you trifle with yourself. Go and select some lively partner, and think no more of a stranger whom you have now seen for the first time, and whom it is more than possible you will never see again." "Do they leave Madrid then so soon? but I will follow them." "I think not," returned the Marquis; "she may remain in Madrid, and yet be concealed from your sight." "Ha!" exclaimed Antonio, "now I begin to suspect!—they are going to seclude her in a convent. Is this the rival of which you told me?" "You have guessed but too truly," answered his friend. "This is what I am but now informed; but I know so well the temper and disposition of Don Tevaro Padilla, that I have no reason to doubt the truth."

"But surely," said Antonio, were I to offer my hand, my rank, my titles, my domains, they would not be rejected." "I fear they would,"

answered the Marquis, with a deep sigh; "you know not this man; his countenance is but a dark reflection of a blacker heart. He is a man, in whose mind some terrible crime is perpetually preying." "But what is that crime?" demanded Antonio. The Marquis started at the question. "What crime!" repeated he. "What crime is that which can harrow up the soul of man with fearful visions, that turn tranquility into warfare, and paint upon the serene brow the deformity of tempest? But this is no place to speak on a subject such as this. Antonio, my dear friend, I have much to say to you, and will appoint a time. My introduction would be a drawback upon your welcome: If, therefore, after what I have hinted, you have any further inclination of forming an acquaintance with this imperious mortal, go, and trust to your own talents."

The Marquis of Denia then withdrew precipitantly, leaving Antonio in a state of doubt and perplexity. The words of his friend had been so singular, that his curiosity was much excited, and he desired more than ever to become acquainted with those persons which had been the subject. "After all," thought he "there was much of incoherence in his words; he seemed like a discarded lover who fears the success of a more fortunate rival. I can but meet a refusal; and surely this beautiful creature is at least worthy the hazard."

The Marquis de los Velos was yet young in life, and not easily checked in his undertakings; he immediately advanced towards the strangers, and, paying his respects to Don Padilla, requested the honour of dancing with the lady.

"She does not dance, Senor," replied Padilla coldly. "But perhaps she might be inclined for once to partake in that amusement," said Antonio; "or wherefore attend a place, in which every one is expected to share in the entertainment?" "That is as I please," answered Don Padilla

frowning; "I hope, Senor, I am not accountable to you for my actions?"

The Marquis attempted to apologize, directing several tender glances towards the lady, who remained silent without daring to raise her eyes from the ground. "Do you reside at Madrid?" said the Marquis. "I am now in Madrid," answered Padilla; "you are very inquisitive young man—Do you know who I am?" "I have not at present that honour," returned De los Velos: "but it is what I sincerely desire." "I must tell you," said Padilla, rather rudely, "that desire is not reciprocal. Senor, this lady will not dance."

The Marquis knew not what to reply: he bit his lips with vexation, looked at the forbidding countenance of the gloomy stranger, and was inclined to walk away; but when his eye turned upon the lady, the visible distress which touched her lovely face with sadness, riveted him to the spot; and conjuring up his effrontery, he said, "I was going to have tendered you my services had you been a new comer to the city; and should have been happy to have introduced you to the court."

"And who told you that I had designs of appearing there?" answered the unbended Cavalier; "methinks you are wonderfully familiar."

"I am sorry if I intrude," said the Marquis. "Then you will be so good as to immediately leave us," replied Padilla with a frown; and turning away his face, he assumed a look of severity which repelled every attempt to reply. Antonio bowed to the lady, and retired to the opposite side of the saloon, employed himself in contemplating the astonishing contrast the gloominess of the father and the mildness of the daughter exhibited.

"Is it possible," said he to himself, "she can indeed be the daughter of this imperious mortal? the whole cast of her countenance is different. His is dark, savage, and inhuman;—hers is open, mild

and good; her elevated forehead is a token of the elegance of her thoughts; her arched eyebrows shews the playfulness of fancy: and her eyes are tempered with that sweetness, which dissolves into a smile upon her lips. And is this lady to be condemned to the solitude of a cloister? is her beauty only to be admired by monks? is she to be the companion of cold, miserable and repining nuns? is she to waste her charms upon withering Time, within the walls of an unmerited prison?—Omnipotent Disposer of human events! counteract so barbarous an injustice!”

While Antonio was lost in a reverie these reflections inspired, the strangers had withdrawn; and, when on looking up he beheld their absence, he started with disappointment and apprehension that he had lost them for ever. He hastened towards the door, and stopping a gentleman then entering—“Which way did she go?” said he eagerly, “did you see them?” “Down the middle walk of the garden,” replied the Cavalier: and immediately the Marquis hurried away, without waiting for further particulars.

He advanced with hasty steps along the walk: discovering by moon light a female figure before him, which from the shape he fancied was the lady he sought, though she now appeared with a long veil reaching nearly to the ground; his heart fluttered with delight at this unexpected opportunity, which he determined should not escape.

“Lady,” said he, “this is a favour I had no hopes to receive from the hands of fortune. I have been in despair that I had no means of introduction; and now, when I least expected, I find myself for an instant happy in being able to speak to you unobserved.”

“O, Senor,” answered the lady, “this is too polite, you are excessively obliging.”

“Not so,” replied the Marquis, a little surprised and greatly encouraged; “you must be aware, lady, that beauty like yours cannot be seen with

indifference." "Beauty like mine," replied the lady in a self complacent tone; "really, Senor, you are the gallantest man—"

"Strange!" thought the Marquis, "what a deception is a female face: who would have thought so amiable an appearance should conceal such a character." "May I be permitted," continued he, in a freer way than he had at first dared to assume; "May I be permitted again to behold those charms which that odious veil conceals, before they shall be forever secluded in a gloomy convent." "Heaven forbid!" exclaimed the lady. "Holy Virgin, how you fright me! A convent, Senor! No, I am not old enough for that I hope. No, no, believe me, I know better!"

"Then I am again deceived," said Antonio to himself; "surely my friend would not have betrayed me. But is this, indeed, the lady I have been so much enamoured of at first view? am I not deceiving myself? If," said he, you are not bent upon entering a convent, why, lady, do you thus conceal your charms? or is it in mercy to mankind?"

"O, I have a great deal of mercy in my nature," replied she; "but you gay Cavaliers never make half so many compliments as when our veils hide us from your curiosity. Beauty is always best when it is fancied, Senor."

"But yours is no fancied beauty, lady; permit me to remove this drapery, and contemplate the reality.—Heavens!" involuntarily exclaimed he, on beholding the haggard visage of an old lady, who had long since been the jest of half Madrid, for an affectation of manners and dress to which she had no pretensions. Antonio was too much confounded at his mistake and loss of time to be polite: and the lady turned angrily away, railing on the ill-breeding of the present age.

The Marquis was too much untuned to be in harmony with pleasure; he sauntered along the walks of the garden, musing on the strange char-

acter of Don Padilla; and encouraging an hope, that however singular the behaviour of his friend, he would be able to learn sufficient from him, at least, to introduce himself at the residence of the strangers.

“He advanced nearer the saloon, where the laugh of hilarity and the notes of joy sounded upon his ear; producing a sensation, which he had never before felt in its full force; the stilness of the gardens increasing the contrast.

The pale moon scattered its silver rays upon the foliage; amongst which scarcely a zephyr was heard to interrupt the silence of nature. The birds had hung their heads beneath their wings, and stilness reigned around—when he was suddenly alarmed by repeated screams, and a burst of confusion mingled with cries of distress.

He hastened to discover the occasion of the tumult; when he perceived one of the lattices in flames, and at once understood the disaster that had happened. Ever alive to relieve the distressed, he hastened to the saloon, where so much confusion reigned, that every one retarded the other, and themselves, by pressing to be first. With a strong arm he tore down one of the window-frames which reached to the ground, and forcing his way in, found the mischief not half so extensive as he had feared—the fire having only taken hold on some ornamental scenery and the lattice frame.

He was surprised to see the Marquis of Denia busily employed in extinguishing the flame, while he had supposed him far distant; but, as he turned round to speak to him, he distinguished the lady he had been seeking fainting upon a sopha, unregarded by any one; each being willing in the confusion to take care of themselves, or those more immediately interesting to them.

Every other consideration gave way to regard for her safety: her senses were wholly overcome with the terror she had suffered; and, raising her in his arms, he endeavoured to press through the

crowd, fearful that every moment might be too late, the heat and smoke being excessive, though the danger of the fire was over. It was impossible to make way through the tumult, many of the ladies being in a similar state; and he had to remain in the most agonizing suspense, till the Marquis of Denia came to his assistance. Between them they supported the unconscious maid into the garden, where the sudden change of air awoke her to recollection.

"Ah! Cavalier," said she, in a tone of deepest softness, as she fixed her eyes upon Denia, "is it to you I owe this obligation? But where is my father?"

"Don Padilla," replied the Marquis, "was not in the room when the accident happened; be not concerned on his account, Almira, depend on his safety. But why are you in Madrid, when I had reason to believe you so many leagues distant? and how is your sister?"

The Marquis De los Velos had till now sat upon a bench supporting the lady with his arms, and gazing upon her face with a countenance expressive of hope and despair; but suddenly starting at this address of his friend, he felt a pang of jealousy cross his heart. "How is this Marquis?" said he, "do you deal treacherously? are you so well acquainted with this lady?"

"Is this Cavalier your friend?" said she, turning her fine eyes upon Antonio, and speaking to the Marquis.

"That is as he behaves," answered Denia with a smile; "he is apt to be very passionate, Senora; and he is now angry that I should share with him the pleasure of having rescued you from the tumult."

"Confusion!" muttered Antonio, while he looked first upon one, and then on the other, unable to determine how much he should believe.

"Pardon me, Senor," said Almira turning to him, "if I omitted you in my thanks to your

friend; but, indeed, I am so confused that——.” Her embarrassment prevented her finishing the words she intended, and Albert de Denia to relieve her went on. “This, Lady Almira, is the Marquis Antonio de los Velos; a Cavalier, who, since he has formed an attachment to a strange lady, has lost the use of his understanding, and——”

“Forbear I beg,” cried Antonio impatiently: “this is trifling beyond sufferance.” Then turning to Almira: Since,” said he I have been so fortunate as to have again the pleasure of seeing you, when my hopes were almost extinguished, will you have the goodness to say when and where I may inquire after your health, which I very much fear will suffer from this night’s surprise?”

“At present,” said Almira, in a low voice, “I am with my father at the palace of the Count Potenza; but I feel myself so much recovered, that I hope I shall find no farther ill effects. I confess I was very much terrified when I fancied the whole saloon in flames.”

“What a contrast does the present moment afford,” said Antonio, pointing to the saloon, (where all was silent, and a solitary taper alone lighted, in place of a thousand that had lately blazed.) “Not an hour since, and the whole was a scene of the most splendid brilliance and joy—no mind presaged the sudden event that was to overthrow the entertainment in terror and confusion: so in real life, we enjoy ourselves upon the brink of a precipice.

Almira shuddered—a deep sigh acknowledged the truth—and looking round she perceived the Marquis of Denia had left them. Antonio felt obliged for this action of his friend. He hesitated a moment, and then said, “Can it be true, lady, that you have chosen to retreat from the world at an age when you are but scarce entered into it?”

“And should such a choice surprise?” answered Almira: “is it not necessary, if I would avoid

the application of what you have but just spoken. I know but little of the world; yet from that little I have learnt the transience of human happiness, and have seen, that when we fancied ourselves most certain of pleasure, we have been nearest distress."

"And have you known sorrow?" said Antonio tenderly, and taking her hand. "Hard must have been the heart that could have given grief to such a subject! But do not forget, that to the world we have some duties that claim us from ourselves, and which are inimical to monastic seclusion."

"True, most true," answered Almira, with a sigh. "But the first duty of a daughter is obedience; and I must obey the commands of my father."

The last word was scarcely pronounced, when her voice dropt in silence, and the figure of Don Padilla stood before them.

"Where have you been?" said he sternly.---
"Hia! follow me, daughter" Then seizing the hand of the trembling maid, he stalked indignantly away, without deigning to notice Antonio.

"Strange!" thought the Marquis. "What a monster to use with such severity a lady whom I would gladly protect in my arms; and who, if my judgment is clear, is exactly the companion I should wish to share my idle hours, and the bounties which Heaven, thro' the means of my ancestors, has bestowed upon me."

The company had some time left the gardens; and finding it late he departed, intending to call upon his friend early in the morning for an explanation of several sentences he could not understand; and which, by turns, gave birth to jealousy, curiosity, and doubt. He imputed much to the incomprehensible character of the Marquis; who was often remarked by his friends as inconsistent in his actions and expressions: sometimes overwhelmed with impenetrable sadness, and at others mingling with the gayest company.

As Antonio passed along the streets which were now solitary and forsaken, he perceived two men in close conversation standing at a corner: he made little doubt of their being robbers, as he could perceive them looking round while they spoke with apparent anxiety. Being on the dark side of the way, and the moon shining bright, he had an opportunity of observing them unseen—he paused to reflect, whether he should watch them, or give the alarm to the guard. While he considered a third person joined them, and after a few words, they crossed the street, and began to move quickly towards the place where Antonio stood. Antonio doubted not but he was discovered; and, clapping his hand upon his sword, stood upon his guard.

The first person who came near immediately perceived him, and said in a low voice, “Antonio De los Velos, follow me.”

“For what purpose?” demanded Antonio; “and whither?”—“For my pleasure, and where I please,” answered the other, in a rough voice. “That must be as I please too,” said Antonio drawing. “You may perhaps think your numbers will frighten me—come on!”

“Ha! ha! ha!” cried the stranger, laughing; “well, you are a man of metal,” and Antonio immediately knew the voice of his friend.

“You again!” cried he; “you are wrapped in mystery to-night: but who are those in your train?”

“Your servant and mine,” replied the Marquis. When I first quitted the room I put ther upon the scent to find the dwelling of Don Padilla; not having any expectation we should have had an opportunity of discovering it ourselves: and now if you are not inclined to sleep, we will go to my palace.”

“You are a clever fellow at intrigue,” said Antonio; “but tell me, Marquis, and on honor, if all this trouble is on mine, or your own account?”

"Can you not be contented with the benefit of the event, without inquiring the motive?" returned Albert. "It was both; both, my dear Antonio; bury your suspicions, and remember I am your friend."

They were not long before they arrived at the Marquis de Denia's; where having taken some refreshment, they provided a couple of bottles of wine, the Marquis dismissed the servants to bed, and carefully locked the door.

"You make use of great precaution," said Antonio, looking round him; "is it treason you are going to debate upon?"

"No," answered Albert, solemnly, it is not treason; yet it is not fit for every mortal ear: the mysteries of fate are unsearchable; and we know not the manner in which the darkest deeds meet the light."

"Deeds of what?" said Antonio, gazing with surprise upon his friend. "What is it you say? what has this to do with Almira?"

"Much, perhaps too much," said the Marquis, drawing his chair to the table. "But now, Antonio, look at the hand of the clock; it is upon the hour of one; at this dread hour of midnight promise me secrecy.—Swear to me——"

"But where there is no crime, can secrecy be necessary," observed Antonio; and where there is a crime, secrecy becomes a fault. You are strangely altered within these few minutes, Marquis."

"I am," replied Albert, "my levity is always assumed. I have at my heart a corroding poison that chills the moments of my existence, and dashes from me the cup of pleasure, when I attempt to raise it to my lips. I once had a friend, the confidant of my soul—but he is now lost to me, and I would take you in his place."

"You are in love, then!" exclaimed Antonio, with a languid smile. "I see where this will end."

"I *am* in love," replied the Marquis, emphat-

ically; "but not, as you imagine, with Almira; therefore your heart may rest. Did you ever hear that I could be guilty of a dishonorable act? The secret that I would trust you with, has little relation to any thing your warmest fancy can suggest. Will you promise me then?"

"I heartily acknowledge, I never knew you guilty of a meanness," replied Antonio. "To say the truth, could such a suspicion have had being in my mind, you had never called me friend: yet, at the same time, this ceremony seems as though you doubted me. But to humour you, I swear—by the holy mass, never will I, without your own consent, reveal what you shall now disclose!"

"Tis enough," said the Marquis, taking his hand, "From this moment let there be the most unlimited confidence between us. Prepare yourself to give credit to things which require your faith; and remember, that it is the Marquis Albert de Denia who relates them."

He paused; and, looking solemnly round the room, leaned his arm upon the table, and thus began.

CHAPTER II.

Ye unknown Pow'rs which hover round mankind
Guard us, when Fate sits brooding in the wind.

"You must remember Fernando de Coello, who was my particular friend from our earliest youth; his family is noble, and, I believe, he is a distant relation of yours."

"He is my first cousin," said Antonio; "and his sudden death gave me considerable grief."

"You surprise me," cried the Marquis; "tell me how?—when did you receive this information?"

"I can say nothing for certain," answered Antonio, "my information reaches merely to the report, that he was slain in a battle with the Moors."

"Report is a common liar," said the Marquis; "I am glad to find you are not better informed. I will now proceed.—When we were extremely young we served together in the army and were rarely asunder but when duty, or our visits to our friends in Madrid, required. This companionship in dangers, in romantic adventures, and the variety to which a soldier's life is ever liable, at once endeared us to each other, and opened our minds to that genial and genuine friendship which, like love, renders trifles of great importance, and gives birth to that communication of fancy, heroism used to inspire.

The leisure of a camp gave our minds opportunity to trace the histories of preceding times; and if we were not tinctured with superstition, we, at least took delight in romance. Having been to chastise some insurgents in the provinces, we were quartered in the city of Grenada. The beauty of that charming country, and the extensive prospect from the mountains of Sierra Nevada, covered with vegetation, and crowned with eternal snow, frequently invited us to ramble.

Sometimes we climbed the heights, and gratified our senses with contemplating a region of enchantment. The hills were overspread with vines and olives; the vallies were clothed, and odoriferous, with a thousand flowering shrubs, of which the hedges are formed: sweet basil intermingled with myrtle. Thyme and lavender grew wild upon the wastes; and the golden tinted saffron delighted the eye, amidst a profusion of flowers. The Mediterranean closed the distant prospect with its blue waves; over which the adventurous bark was frequently seen to glide, like a dark spot on its pellucid surface.

Our duty at the castle of Alkambra was trifling,

not being a part of the garrison; and we consequently had much time upon our hands to indulge our propensity for rambling. On one of those occasions, we walked beyond the city to a considerable distance, following the winding banks of the Darro, amused with the variety of scenery it presented, when we arrived at a grove of tall chesnut trees we had never visited before. The coolness of the shade invited us to rest; and we sat down on the flowery bank (which sloped to the river) regarding the transparent current as it passed, and discoursing on those adventures of which, as soldiers, we had many to recount.

While we admired the beauty of the fertile country, which now presented to our sight, the turrets of several ruined buildings recalled to us the distress which the Morescos had suffered, when driven from the country of their birth, and the lands of their cultivation, by an edict at once cruel and impolitic; and which had converted, in a few months, this whole province into a howling waste, filled it with rapine and slaughter, torn husbands from their wives, and children from their parents, rent asunder the bands of friendship and civil union, and banished more than nine hundred thousand people to the deserts of Africa.

While we were discoursing on this subject, and expressing our indignation at its folly, we perceived a small boat floating down the stream, apparently without any guide; and, as the eddy of the waves set it towards the shore where we sat, it could not but excite our attention.

"Now for a famous adventure of knight errantry," said Fernando; "who knows but some redoubtable magician has sent his enchanted boat, to convey us to some terrible castle, where a fair lady waits the event of our prowess, to be delivered from the Tyrant of the Ironhand."

I smiled at this conceit, and, in the thought of the moment, replied, "Well, Sir Knight, if your courage be undaunted, and you dare brave the

perils of the adventure, I require you on the faith of a knight good and true, to accompany me in the achievement of this adventure."

"Most willingly, sir knight, be it unto life or unto death, I will accomplish the exploit," cried Fernando with humour, leaping into the boat, which the waves had driven close to the bank.

I did not remain behind—and we put off into the middle of the current.

The vessel of which we had thus taken possession was a small pleasure-boat, and seemed to have drifted from its moorings, there being but one oar on board, which served merely to guide, without advancing our progress; an accident which added to our amusement, as it seemed we were wholly to depend upon chance. A bottle of excellent brandy, and some Italian sweetmeats stored our bark: which we received as an intimation that modern knights were not expected to live upon love and air, like ancient heroes. The day being extremely fine, we took much pleasure in our adventure: we continued our voyage, slowly winding amongst the romantic scenery, which now appeared level with the water, and now overhung the liquid mirror, which inverted and reflected the foliage in lengthened and darkened groves.

We beheld the ruins of several Moorish palaces and castles at a distance, and passed a few vessels laden with grain and oil. Our bark moved insensibly along, gliding beneath the dark cliffs, which were crowned with ever-green laurels. The spires of Grenada were lost far behind us; and it was not till towards evening we remembered the necessity of our return.

With some difficulty we put the boat round, and we then found the truth of that proverb, which tells us—it is easiest to swim with the stream. We were at a considerable distance from the city, and, to mend our situation, the wind began to blow very strong.

It was now we began to repent our adventure.

We found it impossible to make way against the stream with only one oar; and we were under the necessity of putting round again, with the intention to land at the first place where there appeared any probability of procuring a conveyance back to Grenada.

The sun, meanwhile, slowly declined in majestic but sullen grandeur. Deep black clouds heavily rose from the far distant ocean, through which his purple beams seemed to break with difficulty, tinging the borders with flame, the mountains and forests caught the servid reflection, glowing with a partial and transient lustre. The wind hurried us along; and the waves began to rise, with an eddy that was far from pleasant to such unskillful mariners in an open boat.

"This is likely to be no comfortable adventure," said Fernando; "I would we had remained on known ground, and not trusted ourselves we know not where. If we should chance to fall upon any of those straggling parties of insurgents which still remain lurking in secret places it may not be so pleasant."

I was not more satisfied with our situation; but taking up the brandy, "Come, my friend," said I, "this is an enchanted liquor, furnished by our invisible guide for the banishment of care." Having refreshed ourselves with the remains of the sweetmeats; we sat still, looking out anxiously for some place of shelter, and watching the quick approach of night.

The sun was not long sunk beneath the horizon before the rain began in large drops to patter on the surface of the water. We would then willingly have put on shore, content with the shelter of the trees, but here it was so broken and rocky, that we durst not venture the slight vessel too near, lest it might be bulged by the force of the wind and stream, which drove us forward at a rapid rate.

In half an hour we perceived, through the gloom

that enveloped us, the ruins of a Moorish castle, which projected boldly to the water's edge. The main tower, which was circular, appeared nearly complete, but the other parts of the building presented only an extensive mass of ruins, spreading over a large space of ground.

We were by this time nearly wet through, notwithstanding a piece of old sail cloth, which we had contrived to spread over us. The storm had not, however, yet arisen to its height the great body of clouds moving on very heavily, and we endeavored to incline the boat towards this ruin, which might, at least, shelter us from its fury. We found ourselves unexpectedly in a strong current, which set forcibly towards the foot of the tower; and we began to be apprehensive it might wreck us on the rocks.

"This is truly astonishing, Marquis," said Fernando; "what are we now to think of this adventure?"

"There wants nothing but a twinkling taper from some of the loop-holes, a guardian dragon, and a drawbridge," returned I, "to complete it. But seriously, I wish we were well over the night. That pile bears upon it the marks of violence, and no doubt its dark recesses are a retreat of some disaffected party."

"Of them I have no fear," replied Fernando; "we have each of us a sword that has been tried, and done service; I am resolved to finish the adventure. We have hitherto been conducted in a very singular way; and though, my friend, we may smile at enchantment, and magic, and spells, yet there are mysteries in nature with which we are unacquainted. I myself——"

He suddenly checked himself at these words; and I could not avoid smiling at his manner, which I imputed to the concurrence of circumstances, such as might have generated superstition in any man.

The night, from the blackness of the clouds, was

profoundly dark; and we remained a few moments in silence.

"Now," said he, "will you believe? the boat has fixed upon the stairs which lead from the water edge up the rock to the castle.—What can this mean?"

"Mean," replied I, "it means nothing extraordinary. Do you not perceive, that the current we are fallen into is caused by the water running into the moat which surrounds the building? let us endeavor to make it fast, and try to find a shelter."

Fernando remained silent, gazing upon the tower, which appeared as if blackened by fire, and awfully gloomy through the storm; being only distinctly visible when the flashes of lightning reflected against its sides. After groping some time with the oar, I discovered a ring, to which we fastened the boat, and ascended the stone steps, cut in the solid rock—a dozen brought us to the landing. The lightning served us for a guide; distinguishing a small porch entire, within which we found the postern gate broken down, leading into the tower.

Within the deepest darkness prevailed; and it was at the utmost hazard we ventured to advance, arm in arm, with our swords extended before us, to avoid, if possible, running against any projection, or falling down some flight of steps. In this manner we advanced along a narrow passage, till we were checked by a stair that we judged wound up to the higher apartments. After a moment's consideration, we resolved to hazard the event—curiosity impelling us onwards.

The place being narrow, I advanced first, cautiously proceeding, when, on a sudden I found myself violently seized by the arm; and Fernando in a low voice, demanded if I heard nothing?

"Death!" cried I, "what do you hear? what, or who have you suffered to pass?" At the same time I endeavored to release my arm from the

grasp of I knew not what; but which, to my imagination, seemed to hold me stronger than a dozen men.

"Nothing has passed," replied Fernando; "it is I who have hold of your arm:—Heavens how you tremble! did not you hear a noise?"

"You," said I, checking my vexation and inclination to laugh; "on my word, I thought myself in the paws of some fiend; it is in vain to deny it. But what did you hear!—Hark!—surely I heard a hollow murmuring sound! We had better retreat and brave the storm."

"No," replied Fernando, "no; we will either advance or perish." I felt assured at this confidence, and ashamed of my own fears. "Come on then," said I, "my brave fellow! we have before this entered a breach together, and shall we be afraid because it is dark, and the wind sighs along the passages?"

This flight of stairs led to a landing, which opening wide, we fancied ourselves in some chamber; and paused while the thunder rolled over us, and shook the building to its base.

The lightning that flashed through the long narrow loop-holes allowed us to distinguish a few objects, which were seen for a moment, and then involved in tenfold darkness. No furniture appeared in the room, except a broken bench, the head of a rusty pike, and a Moorish turban.

We sat down upon the bench, leaning upon our swords, and watching more attentively than if surrounded by an hostile camp. Several times we fancied that some voice passed along the wind, which loudly sounded through the avenues; now howling along the passages, and then dying away in gentle sighings. Amidst the intermission of the thunder, we heard the lashings of the waves against the shore, and the rain poured down in rushing torrents.

A vivid flash of lightning, which seemed to sleep upon the floor, for a few moments wholly illumina-

ated the chamber; and the succeeding flashes occurred with such quick succession, that a constant blaze filled the chamber.

"What is that?" said Fernando, in a whisper.

"Where?" demanded I.

"Look in that corner to the right, Albert," said he. "Do you not see that dark bundle?—It is either a murdered traveller, or some person wrapped in a cloak.—Most probably some robber," whispered he.

"I see it," replied I, and the next instant the lightning again left us in total darkness. "Let us plunge our swords into him while he sleeps," added I, in a low voice; "we must prevent him doing us a mischief in the dark."

"Not so neither," whispered Fernando, "it may be some innocent stranger: at most he is but one to two, let us advance cautiously, and examine him before he shall awake and alarm his comrades if he has any."

We proceeded gently across the floor, which creaked beneath our feet. I stooped down, and took hold of the dark wrapper. A burst of thunder, which rolled and broke over the roof with a tremendous crash, caused me to start away with involuntary horror.

"Perhaps," said Fernando, in a low solemn voice, "it is for me this strange business is reserved—I will examine the bundle." He traced cautiously over it, to discover if it owned a human shape, and pressing his hand upon it, it made no other resistance than a bundle of cloth, and he became satisfied it was no human being. It was bound round with a leathern belt, which he cut through with his sword, and shaking it by the middle, something fell heavy upon the ground, and a piece of metal rolled to a distance.

"Hush!" said he, "I thought I heard a sound!"

"Very probable," said I; "'tis most likely the robbers to whom this booty belongs, and our curiosity will be rewarded." I stepped a little on one

side to prepare for an attack, the wind being so loud that I frequently fancied voices and footsteps were approaching: my foot hit against something hard, and stooping down, I found it to be a dagger without a case. I drew it through my fingers to judge of its size and shape; and, from its roughness, fancied it to be rusty.

"Yes," said Fernando, with a sigh so deep, that it almost amounted to a groan: "no doubt it is rusty—dipped in the blood of some innocent, by the hand of rapine or revenge:—give it me—I will preserve it." I could not but admire the strange alteration he had undergone within these few hours; and though he appeared more forward and hardy than myself, I could not but fancy it was excess of fear, which I had often seen produce the greatest shew of bravery.

It was now past midnight, the storm was evidently going further, and the lightnings flashed at a distance through the horizon. "I fear," said I, "for our little bark, which is most likely dashed to pieces against the rocks, and we shall have some difficulty in returning to Grenada."

"That same Power," replied Fernando, "which conducted us here, can lead us back."

"And are you really of opinion, my friend," answered I, "that an invisible Power did lead us to this ruined castle?" "I am most certain," said he, and paused as if musing on some distant thought.

"Then you believe in magic? you believe that intangible beings can act on corporeal substance?"

"I do. I have reasons, my friend; reasons that would convince yourself."

"I would then willingly hear them," said I; "I have been your companion these five years, in toils, in hardships, and in dangers, and you never informed me of this."

"Never," replied he gravely: "I endeavored myself to forget, but this strange adventure returns my memory strong upon me, and harrows

up my imagination. I will speak low; for I am satisfied this place has inhabitants; but whether they be mortal or no, I know not." I had no mind to interrupt him, for his gravity, and the solemnity of the impenetrable darkness, conspired to raise images of horror.

"Do you remember, nine months ago, upon this very day, I entered the age of manhood; and was interrupted in our intention of keeping that event with a little feast amongst our comrades, by an order to join a party going out to forage? Do you not remember, that I returned to you so pale and altered that you hardly knew me? and that I imputed the cause to a sudden illness which had seized me?"

"I remember," said I.

"And so do I," continued he, "I shall remember it for ever! Our way lay through a deep defile, overhung with gloomy cork-trees, and so intricate that we feared every moment falling into an ambuscade. The pass was so gloomy that it appeared like the twilight of evening, and not being the chief in command, I halted in the rear, to see that no stragglers remained behind. When the whole party had passed I followed into the defile; the sound of steps behind me, caused me to turn round, when I perceived another soldier apparently lame; yet, I thought he moved forward amazingly quick for a wounded man.

I was a little surprised, as I had not observed any man behind, and halted till he came up, intending to reprimand him for his negligence. "What's the matter," cried I, "that you hang so far behind your comrades? what accident have you met with?"

"Fernando Coello," said he in a tone like that of a dying man, "I have received a mortal blow; you alone can relieve me."

"How is that to be done, friend?" inquired I; "where are you hurt?"

"Deep, deep," said he; "my hurt is here:

laying his hands upon his breast. "'Tis you alone can cure me.—Promise me you will."

"Why should I promise you?" said I. "I am no surgeon, but I will see you properly taken care of." He shook his head and sighed. "You surely would not have me promise what I cannot perform?"

"You can," answered he; you alone can. You must promise me, Fernando Coello: this is your birth day, and you shall promise me."

"But why? who are you?" demanded I, astonished at the familiarity of a man dressed like a common soldier.

"Who I am signifies not," returned he in an elevated voice: "such as I am may you never be. Many are my wrongs and my wounds are deep. You, you, Fernando Coello, are the man in all the earth who must redress me. Promise that you will. Swear by the rolling orbs, by the great deeps of the earth's foundation—Swear—"

"You are mad," said I, alarmed at his manner: "You talk strangely."

"But I am not therefore mad," replied he, "every thing about me is strange: strange as the grave. But fate, deep and dark, terrible and eternal fate sits over your house, unless you give me this promise."

"Tell me quick then," said I, "what am I to do, the troops are proceeding, and I shall be too late."

"You will be, indeed, too late," replied he, "if you do not resolve instantly. The fortune of your house depends on the decision of this moment. Give me your word, or die."

I cannot describe to you how strangely I was affected: there was something so shockingly solemn in his voice, that it pierced to my inmost soul: and, believing that there could be nothing very particular in promising my aid to a wounded man, I replied—I grant your request: I promise to right your wrongs if I have the power, and to cure your wounds, if I have the means.

"You are mine! You are mine! You are mine!" cried he, three times, in a voice of exultation. "Give me your hand." I held out my hand, and he took hold of it : but his touch was the touch of death, damp and clammy, and cold, it chilled my veins, creeping through them with indescribable horror. At that moment I heard the trumpet sound to a quick march, and turning round my face, I looked again, and no one stood near me. I was struck with so much astonishment (for had this appearance been human, I am certain it could not have escaped me,) that, though we had a smart action with the enemy, the impression remains indelible.

"Have you never heard or seen any thing since of this strange apparition?" said I: "are you certain your imagination was not deluded with chimeras?" "Certain," replied he: "till the adventure of this night, I had hoped never to see or hear farther: but now I fear I shall be called on to the performance of that fatal promise. This dagger—What sound is that? I am certain I heard a step." "Some one advances," said I, "be prepared." We sat still, scarcely venturing to breathe. A slow step advanced up the stairs, and entered the chamber. It passed distinctly across the room, pausing as if to listen between every step, till it went through the opposite avenue. It was not till then Fernando acquired courage to speak. "Who knows," said he, "but this may be the wounded soldier? yet what should he do here?"

"I rather think," said I, "that it is some assassin, or freebooter in the dark. Who goes there" said I aloud.

"Who goes there?" replied a voice in the same tone. "Answer me!" cried I, "are you a friend?" "Are you a friend?" returned the voice.

"This is strange!" said Fernando in a whisper: then speaking aloud, "If you are a friend

advance!" "Advance!" returned the voice, and again all was silent. "This is most singular," observed Fernando in a whisper, "do you hear any sound of footsteps?" "None," answered I: "I did not observe which way the person went, who I am certain passed us. I will find it out!" cried Fernando aloud. "Find it out!" replied the voice.

"This is a very good-natured spirit," said I, glancing at once upon the truth; "when you speak above the common tone, the hollow pile re-echoes the sound." We then repeated aloud several sentences, admiring the effect which had so startled us: but we could not, by this means, account for the person who had certainly crossed the chamber.

The grey line of dawning day breaking over the distant hills, we began to lose much of our apprehension, and to feel a curiosity to examine the building which had so much excited our fears. Through the narrow loop hole we watched the distant and gradual increase of light, dispersing the blue mists which curled over the hills: where, yet, no prominent feature could be distinguished.

When the light rendered objects perceptible, we ventured to ascend the winding stairs, which led to the battlements: where we were enchanted with the beauty of the prospect. The cool fragrant air of the morning breathed over the reviving plants: whose colours, by the rain of the night, were enlivened and deepened. The flowers began already to open their leaves to the coming day: and the clear sky assumed the blush, which fore-runs the approaching sun.

We beheld at a great distance the turrets of Granada, and which ever way the eye turned, the scenes were delighted with a profusion of vegetation.

We were not without some apprehension of the person who had passed us in the night, as he probably was lurking in some secret part of the build-

THREE SPANIARDS.

ing or might have joined his comrades, with intent to fall upon us with a force we should be unable to withstand. Our boat we saw beneath us a wreck upon the landing place, and we descended again to our chamber, to consult on our mode of proceeding.

The bundle we had half examined in the night, now attracted our attention. On the floor, at some distance, lay a small portrait, which had fallen. Fernando took it up, and holding it to the light, exclaimed, "What an admirable countenance! what expression! what tenderness! Ah!" my friend, if the original lives, and I could find her I would immediately engage for life."

"I should smile to see you in love with a picture," said I: "but how came it here?"

"How!" cried he, with a look of horror. "Ah! Marquis, you have awakened in my breast the most cruel anguish. Surely no ruffian hand could deform so lovely a countenance—a countenance that might charm fiends into admiration."

"But she is dressed in the Moorish fashion; she is perhaps one of those who have suffered from the edict of Philip," said I.

"Pray do not name it," replied Fernando; "the very suspicion kills me. Look at that mouth—Heavens! what an inimitable smile! the very lips seem parting, to speak a sentiment of kindness!"

I advanced, and opening the bundle, found it to consist of a Moorish dress, very much spoiled with damp and time, and stained in several places with blood.

"This is not a lady's dress," said I, "it has most likely belonged to some traveller, and that is the portrait of his mistress. I do not admire this dismal looking place; it is more horrible by day, than by night—murder seems written upon the walls, and violence sits upon the battlements!—Let us go."

Fernando still examined the picture, which he could not enough admire; at length his attention

turned upon the bundle which I was separating, and he agreed with me, that it could not have lain in so exposed a situation for the time; the fashion distinguished its form, or it would have, at least, been rotten with damp: it appeared more probable that it had been brought thither by some free-booter; and was not unlikely to belong to the person we were certain had found concealment somewhere, as we had noticed his ascent, but had heard no more of him.

"We will endeavor to find him," said Fernando; "most likely he can give an account of this picture, and that fatal habit, stained with blood, and pierced, most likely, with this dagger."

From the little corridor two stairs presented; the one narrow and winding, leading immediately to the battlements; the other, the main staircase to the upper rooms. All the doors had been burnt or broken down by violence, presenting a free passage over the whole tower. We ascended without difficulty, and entered the higher suit of rooms, consisting of three chambers. We looked round with suspicious care, but not the smallest vestige of an inhabitant appeared. We examined the flooring, that no secret trap-door might escape us—most of these antique structures have very singular concealments. We were upon the point of returning, when Fernando remarked the traces of muddy feet upon the floor, and we followed them into the second chamber, where we suddenly lost them; nor could all our skill discover any possible place of concealment, or way of escape.

Tired with so fruitless a search, we returned to the first chamber, and thence to the ground floor, cautiously examining every place that promised any information, and carrying with us the garments we had found.

From the extensive piles of ruins, and many fallen columns of marble, it was easy to trace the once magnificent and extensive structure. The marks of fire were visible upon the whole; and it was

probably the great solidity of the remaining tower which had rescued it from the general conflagration.

Not being able to make any farther discovery, we began on foot our journey back to Grenada. I knew not what to think of the story Fernando had told me; because, though I was as certain of his veracity as though I had been myself witness of the fact, yet so long a time having passed without further intimation, induced me to fancy there must have been some deception, which the gloominess of the defile had favored: then, on the other hand, our recent adventure bore every mark of superstitious romanticity, though it might yet be no more than a curious concurrence of circumstances.

At Grenada we made several inquiries concerning the Moorish castle; but gained no information relating to our adventure.

We learnt that it had formerly been a palace belonging to a Moorish prince; that it had since descended to the family of Ferendez, and had finally been burnt under the edict of Philip, as affording shelter to the resisting party.

CHAPTER III.

Harke! the ravenne flappes hys wynges

In the briere'd delle belowe;

Harke! the dethe-owl loude dothe synges

To the nyghte-mares as heie go.

Chatterton.

FERNANDO became every day more enraptured with the portrait, visiting every place of public resort, from the church down to the lowest public walks, in hopes of meeting, if not the original, at least, some figure which might distantly approach. He frequently complained to me of the cruel sin-

gularity of his fate, in not so much as knowing whether his mistress were living or dead, young or old.

I constantly ridiculed this singular whim : and as our troops were soon to quit Grenada, I advised him to throw away the picture and the dagger, and laugh with me at the whole adventure. He became more reserved in his behavior; and I was not sorry to be less troubled with his wonders and conjectures about the origin of the miniature, which he would willingly have made the constant theme of our discourse.

In about a fortnight we quitted Grenada; and, after a tedious march of some days, entered the province of Andalusia. At the first village on the road we halted with as many men as the place would receive; the rest of the party going forward.

As we entered the yard of our inn, we found a travelling fortune-teller; one of those men who sell amulets and charms, who vend amongst country peasants philtres to procure affection, and are a nuisance in every society where they are tolerated. He was mounted on a tub in the inner yard and surrounded with a gaping crowd of villagers and muleteers, who were amused with his grotesque gestures, and eager to buy his drugs.

We took our station a little on one side, admiring the simplicity of the peasants, who believed him first physician to the Emperor of China. "Is it possible," said I to Fernando, "the credulity of mankind can be so absurd, as to believe a man who, by his own account, is the richest upon earth, and who yet will play more tricks than a baboon for a maravidie?"

He overheard this observation; for our figure had attracted his attention, and turning suddenly round, "Senors," said he, with a penetrating look, "I know that which you want to know. The secrets I possess no other man inherits."

Fernando immediately took this speech to himself, which, in fact, was no more than the general

cant of these fellows; but the perplexity of his mind made him catch at every thing that inclined towards mystery. "Let us now enter," said he, "and refresh ourselves, we will examine this man after the villagers are gone."

"Very well," answered I, "we will both have our fortunes told. The rogue has seen by our dress that we are of quality, and will make his guesses accordingly; but, in the first place—here Host! what have you got for supper?" The Host was a jolly dark-complexioned fellow, and thrusting his hands into his belt, he replied,

"Please you, my Señors, it grieves me to say how bare we are at present of provisions. These doctors carry such a train with them, that every thing is swept away where they come. I verily believe all the pigs and fowls in Andalusia would not stay their stomachs a fortnight; and then, as to salads, they cleared my whole garden in a night like a swarm of locusts."

"Have you got any eggs?—Can we have any omelet," demanded Fernando. "No, Señors," replied he, bowing, "I have not an egg, nor any onions, nor garlic; and beside, it is not a fast-day, so that we have no fish in the whole village."

"Do you know us?" cried Fernando impatiently: "Do you know it is at your peril thus to treat the King's officers."

"I crave your mercy," replied the host. "I am sure such worthy Cavaliers cannot expect something from nothing; and if I had the superbest larder nobody should be more heartily welcome."

"Well, well," cried I, impatiently, "no prating, it's easy to see what you are aiming at, you do not expect us to pay you. I promise you we shall not quarter on you for nothing; only stir yourself, and let us have the conjurer to supper."

"Tis done, Señors, 'tis done; I always sup myself with the conjurer. I will endeavour to prevail on him to part with his share. Some of his

train have been out to forage, and they never return empty. Meanwhile, Senors, what do you say to a manchet, and a bottle of the right Barcelona."

"Fetch it quickly," said Fernando, and the host instantly disappeared. We had scarcely entered into the question we proposed to put to the conjurer, when the host returned with the wine, and holding it up to the light,

"By the mass," said he, "but this is the right sort, as clear as fountain water, and as strong as *aqua vitæ*. I never uncork a bottle of this, but when some of his majesty's officers honor me with a call. I'll be your taster if you please."

We were entertained with his humor, so different from the stiff and grave manner of Castilians, and we diverted ourselves with inquiring about his neighbors, and listening to half a-dozen tales of village scandal. "Now, this," said he, taking his glass very familiarly, "is what I like: this tells me, Senors, that you have seen the world—so have I, for that matter. The other day, there came here a gruff old Don, proud as a bashaw, and grim as a starving wolf. Marching here and there, and saying nothing to nobody, he looked for all the world like a man going to be hanged. His servants, indeed told me, that he goes once a year to Grenada to do penance for his sins. Sure enough he looked like a murderer."

"A murderer!" repeated Fernando, "did you say he was a murderer?"

"No, Cavalier," replied the host, "I said he looked like one, (and I have seen murderers in Italy:) but a man is not always to be taken by his looks: or else, Senor, under favor, we should some of us be in as bad a case as Don Grim."

"You make very free with your guest, I think," said I.

"Not more so than I wish them to be with me," replied he. "Why now, Senors, can you guess why I took up an inn, and left my dear little na-

tive village, in France, where I used to cut hair, and shorten beards? It was because I loved freedom and variety of character. An inn is more free than a palace: you do as you please, you come when you choose, and go when you fancy. You meet all characters on a level: wit has liberty to show itself, and modesty loses its shame."

"So indeed it appears," cried Fernando with impatience, "if ever thou hadst any shame, recal a little of it now, and leave us."

"There is a true shame and a false shame" continued he coolly: "the true shame is——"

"Cease this impertinence," cried I: "go and hasten the supper."

"It will be ready before you think of it," said he. "Talking beguiles the time, and in an inn a man has a right to say what he pleases. An inn is the centre of mirth, jollity, and good living. Etiquette is left at the door; and so, Senors, let us finish this bottle. Ho! ho! by St. Christoval, here comes his high mightiness, first physician to the Emperor of China, corn-cutter to the Cham of Tartary, and parer of nails to the Great Mogul."

We could not avoid laughing at the humor of our host; but the doctor coming in, we prepared seriously for supper, which was not bad of the kind. Our host's wine contributed to raise our spirits, and he began to rally the doctor on his occult pretensions.

"I beg," said he, after we had supped, "that you will now put me to the proof. I have heard all your doubts, and will now endeavor to remove them. In the first place, let us have three candles." When the host quitted the room to order the lights, "send that man away," said the doctor. "I will amuse him with some common fancies, and then you may get rid of him."

"What is your name?" inquired Fernando. "It is Almonzor, and my native country is Arabia, where the only pure knowledge of the Cabal-

is to be acquired: You have said, that magic being contrary to the general laws of nature, it is incredible and impossible; but remember that every accident is a species of magic, with the cause of which we are unacquainted. Were I to take some grains of gun-powder, and kindle them before a company of rude Indians, would they not suppose me a companion of the infernal spirit. So when we rise to the higher system of the Cabella, or combination of natural principles, the mass of mankind stand upon the level of savages."

"Nothing can be fairer," said I; "but here comes De Tormes. The candles being brought, Almonzor amused us with several very curious experiments. In particular, he took from his travelling trunk a crystal basin, and placing it upon the table between the three candles, ranged in equal angles, he poured into it a large phial of a mixed liquor, which separated in the basin into different strata, the lowermost taking the appearance of granite, above that gravel, and then clay, next slime, and on the surface water. Into this he poured an elixir, and a metallic tree began to arise, expanding gradually into branches, leaves, and flowers. A few drops of a third phial caused the blossoms to fall, the leaves to wither, and the trunk to become in appearance dead.

All this, though curious, seemed within the limits of human comprehension; but it considerably raised our opinion of his ability, and having dismissed the host, we began to question him upon his powers of prescience.

"I would wish," said I, "to know what shall happen to me within the next three months?"

"You will learn," said he gravely, after a few moments pause, "news which you do not wish, and you will receive that which all men desire."

"And I," said Fernando; "what will happen to me?"

"Shew me the palm of your left hand. You will travel long before you find rest. You will be l

danger of perishing by violence, which if you escape you may live to old age."

"But of what sort will be that violence?"

"By the sword," replied Almonzor. "You have some secret which now employs your thoughts--beware of the consequences."

"Here," said Fernando, "here is a picture, can you tell me if that lady lives?"

Almonzor took the picture, and for some moments gazed upon it with silent surprise. "Where," cried he at length, "where did you meet this?" Then starting up, he exclaimed wildly, and with a look of horror, "Cold, cold are now those lips that once swelled as the rose of the spring, and opened as the flower to receive the morning dew. This polished forehead is no longer smooth. Time has printed his finger upon it. Those eyes clear as the living lustres of the heavens are now dim as the stars of twilight through the vapors of the evening. These cheeks blooming with the health of perfect youth, are pale and hollow, and wan. Oh, Time! savage and remorseless monster! what hast thou left of all that was lovely. The daughter of health, of beauty, of excellence, is gone. Fresh victims feed thy pride and thy power. Oh! children of a moment: what are ye? Visions of twilight, whither go ye?"

While he uttered these words he strode about the room, with marks of phrenzy in his eyes: he paused, stamped with great agitation: he put his hand to his head in agony, and, suddenly laying the picture on the table, darted out of the room.

"What say you to this man?" inquired I: "do you think him most knave or fool?"

"I think it very extraordinary," replied Fernando, "His knowledge is wonderful. Has he not told us what will happen? Did he not guess my secret?"

"And who could not, my friend?" returned I. "It is plain, at first sight of your countenance, that something preys upon your mind. There is

no hazard in that conjecture: and as to his predictions, I will interpret them. I am to receive news I do not wish, and to gain that which all men desire. In the first place I do not wish to hear the death of any of my relations, yet in so large a family, it may be a great chance if I do not, or how many things there are we do not wish to hear. Then what does a soldier desire more than honor? and what is more likely than that I shall receive it, after a successful campaign."

"But then," said Fernando. "how does he know I am to travel?"

"Why are you not travelling now? Are soldiers ever at rest? He has had the goodness to tell you, you are in danger of violence. I hope when you are in the field of battle, you do not expect to die in your bed? and after you escape all these dangers (mark his sagacity) you may live to be old."

"But this picture," said my friend: "what horrors spread over his face when he saw it, and how could he tell whether the original were living or dead."

"You observed, when he took the picture how minutely he examined it? From the workmanship, the manner of the coloring, he could guess the time it was first painted: the rest was all grimace and stage-trick to astonish the senses, and awaken superstition."

The Host here made his appearance, and informed us, that the first physician in the world was suddenly taken ill, and had retired to rest. "And so will we," replied I: "I see he is master of his trade."

In the morning, on inquiring for Almonzor, we learnt that he had departed by break of day: a circumstance that staggered even Fernando, who began to feel the absurdity of cherishing an inclination for a person perhaps mouldered into dust.

We continued our rout till we arrived at Toledo, where we were to remain for further orders

We had made a long day's march, through a barren country, where the heat had much incommoded us, rendering rest very desirable: the duties of our office were therefore no sooner over, and supper finished, than we retired to our chamber. Our accommodation being here on a large scale we preferred separate beds: and I indulged myself with the prospect of a night's repose, which rarely falls to a soldier on a march.

Fernando prevented my sleeping by frequently exclaiming, "What is that oppresses my spirits? I am certain, Albert, some misfortune hangs over me." Twice he awoke me as I was sinking to sleep with inquiries, if I was well: and expressions of fear, that some accident was about to befall us. I was by no means pleased with these interruptions, which to me seemed the offspring of superstition, in a mind that had given way to melancholy forebodings, and desired he would suffer me to sleep.

About the middle of the night, I was alarmed by a considerable pressure upon my breast, which was so heavy that I could scarcely breathe. On opening my eyes, I perceived by the light of a lamp which burnt in the room, the figure of a man leaning over me, with his left hand upon my breast.

Marquis of Denia," said he, "rise!"

"I am not the Marquis de Denia," said I, "my father is yet alive." "He is dead!" said the person: "Rise! rise immediately and make no noise."

I was astonished, as you may believe, at this address from a person I had never seen before: and though I was considerably alarmed for my own safety, I began to dress, the stranger sitting down by the bed-side. "What is it you want," said I "at this singular hour?" "Not more singular," said he, "than the business upon which I am come!—Hasten, Marquis! Time wears apace—Follow me!"

"Follow you!" repeated I; "to where?—May I not awaken my friend?"—"No!" replied he; "look at me and obey me."

I started with an unknown sensation, when I distinguished by the dim twinkling lamp, that he was dressed as a common soldier—his eyes looked wildly upon me: and his countenance was the countenance of death. The story of my friend rushed upon me with conviction. "'This,'" thought I, "is the being whom he met in the defile: he announces my father's death, and wherefore does he visit me." I felt the dreadful necessity of obeying him and followed his motions in silence.

I observed that his steps admitted no sound: and my terror increased when I beheld the doors open before us, and close at the waving of his hand. "What does this mean?" thought I: "am I to give credit to my senses, or do I dream?"

He led the way without speaking or looking round, till we passed the town and crossed the bridge at the end of it. I then ventured to inquire where I was to go? and to what purpose?

"Marquis of Denia, follow me," was the only answer I received and that in a tone of voice so unusual, that I had not sufficient courage to reply.

We passed across several bye-paths, and over several bridges, till I became so tired I knew not how to proceed. We at length entered a thicket that spread along the banks of a river: and after some time, came to a high embankment, which was covered with thick and almost impenetrable trees, hanging over the stream, whose cheerless waves emitted a melancholy sound beneath us. No path seemed to lead from this dismal situation, total darkness hung round us, and we stood upon the brink of a precipice. I started at my situation. I had hitherto obeyed implicitly the motions of this strange phantom, and I recoiled at remembering the tales of my childhood, which here seemed realized in my present uncertain situation, where

death seemed to await me, and no human help was nigh. The magnitude of my danger aroused my resolution: "I will go no farther," cried I, "your purpose may surely be as well answered here as at a mile distance.—Speak! tell me what you want?"

"Do you mark this place?" said he, "Time and you shall bear witness. Fernando Coello is your friend!—he is mine!—he has given his word!—Attend me!"

He motioned to a thicker part of the forest; my feet seemed to move against my will, and about fifty paces led to a small circle of trees, thickly surrounded by underwood. As well as I could perceive through the gloom, it appeared one of those close recesses, where robbers might safely lurk to fall upon the lonely traveller. I had acquired greater courage from the success of my last address. I paused again, and turning round to this mysterious being; "For what have you led me here?" demanded I in a firm voice.

"Ascend that tree, Marquis," pointing with his hand; "hide yourself amidst the foliage; wait for an hour; but as you value your life be silent."

"Ridiculous!" said I, "what am I to see there?"

"Are you not already satisfied," said he sternly, "that my words are no jest? Touch me and know whether the grave can lie!"

I stretched out my hand to his, but no ice could have been colder. I shrunk back unable to reply. He pointed in silence to the tree; and, after such conviction, I could not disobey. I looked down when I had reached the first boughs, where the leaves were sufficiently thick to conceal me, but he was gone; and I remained some time in a confusion of mind easily accounted for. I became accustomed to my situation; reflecting on the little foresight we possess, with all our boasted sagacity. Should I have not considered the

man as insane, who should have whispered to me when I was retiring to rest at Tolosa, that I should pass part of that night in a tree, in a forest I knew not where? How many times have we experienced similar circumstances, and yet we boast of our knowledge?

I had continued at my post about half an hour, when I heard voices advancing. Two men approached, and sat down on the grass beneath me. Their voices were harsh and severe; but the darkness did not allow me to distinguish more. I remained in silence, as I had been cautioned, scarcely daring to think, lest I should betray my situation. One of them, with a rapier, examined the bushes; while the other, taking a dark lantern from beneath his black cloak, placed it upon the grass, and spreading a coarse cloth, opened a goat skin bag, from which he took some pieces of cheese, and bread and garlic. The other, being satisfied no person was concealed, sat down with his comrade, and began eagerly to eat.

"These are hard times, Lopez," said he; "this is not the fare we used to have in former days when our services were wanted."

"By the Holy Virgin!" replied Lopez, "he shall repent it! His borrowed honours shall be taken away! The secret that we know shall blast him to the centre. The Moorish castle——"

"Aye, Lopez, that castle might tell a tale!--- But that is in our own breast, and the winds shall not hear it till the proper time. Were my suspicions certain, by the blasting lightning! I would make them swallow my rapier!"

"I have my doubts upon that business, Jacques; for I heard two voices, or I would then have been satisfied. You know I am no coward, but that chamber unmanned me."

"Had I been there," said Jacques, my nerves would not have been so weak, I should have told a better tale; but you was startled at the tempest of the night, and let two simple travellers carry

away the only positive proof we could bring. That dagger would of itself have confounded him; and we might have lived like princes."

I began to suspect that this Lopez had been the man whom we had heard cross the chamber of the Moorish tower, and I confess I began to tremble at my situation. I listened, scarcely daring to breathe, to the discourse of these wretches, whose horrid features were but partially visible by the dim light of the lantern which burnt between them. They continued to eat and discourse; mingling their words with execrations and oaths.

"The old Don is not returned," said Lopez; "he pays a regular visit to that ruin. Does he go to examine the wreck he has made, or to *visit the dead?*"

"Think'st thou, Lopez, that blood hurts his conscience? no, no, he sleeps tranquil upon a bed of carnage; no ghosts trouble his slumbers: but we shall start upon him more fearfully than the grave; we shall demand a recompense for our services that will not be easily satisfied. He thought we were secure when the Turks took the galley."

"And yet, Jacques," replied Lopez, "I have heard another story. Every peasant can tell you the moroseness of his behaviour; savage to his daughters, and a tyrant to his servants. Something they say he has seen, and I know not---"

"Away with this folly!" cried Jacques, "by St. Peter! Lopez, you become an old woman!-- You will be useless in the profession, if you lend your ear to all the babbling tales of these idiots. Seen! há! ha!"

"You are merry, comrade," replied Lopez; "we have no *aqua vitæ*, or I might bear you company. But I have not forgot that night: fearful indeed it was, and near this place too! I shall never forget how he strangled--"

"At it again!" cried Jacques. "Aye, aye," said Lopez, "you may jest, Jacques; pity never entered your composition. Indeed, for that mat-

ter, I have not much to spare: but, by the Holy Virgin! I felt some repugnance—the wind whistled about us, and the rain fell.—He little dreamed of the journey he was going to take.”

“I love not these stories,” said Jacques, in a gruff voice; “many a man sets out on a journey, that never comes back again. It seems he has got rid of his second wife as easy as the first! On my soul, I wish we could accommodate matters with him; he is such a true son of the blade, that my heart feels a friendship for him—Nobody should have served him truer, if he had not so meanly stopped our salary. That galls me, and he shall repent it.”

“That he shall,” cried Lopez: “but you remember the hint that I dropped to you the other day? if we could bring them to bear, our fortunes would be no more out at the elbows. I have seen the ladies, they are delicate creatures, and no doubt old Don Padilla will comply to save his neck.”

“I know but one objection,” said Jacques; “his nephew has not long been of age—he is the only male heir, and must be first put out of the way.” “Fernando,” replied Lopez, in a low voice, “is now at Tolosa—we will——”

My rage and horror at these words overcame my reason, and prevented my listening further to a plan which raised me almost to madness. “Villains! Murderers!” exclaimed I. “We are betrayed!” cried Lopez, shutting the lantern, “who can have overheard us? but death shall close his mouth from telling tales.”

One of them immediately fired a pistol into the tree, the ball of which rushed among the leaves without hitting me, it being totally dark. I was aware of the extent of my own imprudence, but it was now too late to regret, and leaping from the tree, sword in hand, the force of my weight brought one of them to the ground, and my sword pierced him through the heart. It was so firmly fixed,

passing through him into the earth, that I endeavored in vain to withdraw it, and I lay upon him at the mercy of his comrade, who instantly struck at me with a dagger, wounding me severely in the arm. In the dark he could not distinguish me from his companion, and repeating his blow, he buried it in the body of his friend; swearing he had now done my business: but to make sure, he lifted the pistol he had discharged, and, with a blow deprived me of sense.

CHAPTER IV.

This bears the marks of more than mortal man.

WHEN I recovered, I found that it was morning. I attempted to rise, but was so weak with loss of blood, that it was with extreme pain and difficulty I crept away from the assassin, which was clotted with gore.

I sat down on a bank, where I was so much overcome with faintness, that I expected every moment to breathe my last. While I sat thus, with the horrid object of the dead body before me, I reflected upon the death of my father, which, after what had happened, I could no longer doubt; and the awful manner in which I had received the information, added to the melancholy tidings.

No person approached, and my voice was too feeble to be heard. I looked round, but the place was wild, and without any path that I could distinguish. In this situation I gave myself up to the expectation of death; and I cannot say I felt the regret which might have been expected in one so young, and with so many prospects of future pleasures.

"At most," thought I, "a very few years

would have deprived this body of its vigor, and reduced it to its present imbecility—my senses would have gradually decayed, my years would have fled by as moments, and my place would, in a very short time, have been no longer acknowledged amongst the living. Fearful and tremendous moment! inconceivable change!—But this present moment and my body is animated with various sensations, my mind is endowed with the powers of reflection; yet how soon, and I shall be, like that body before me, a mass of inert and unconscious matter!”

From these meditations I fell into a reverie, from which I was roused by a slight rustling of the branches, and, raising my eyes, I perceived something move along the thicket, I elevated my voice as loud as possible, but my efforts were too feeble to be heard, and I resigned myself again to my fate. A moment after a little dog came barking into the copse, followed by two ladies, who were led by his clamors.

At sight of the dismal scene which presented to their eyes, they uttered a loud cry of horror; one of them appeared nearly fainting, leaning upon her companion for support, which delayed their flight, and gave me time to arrest their attention.

“Ladies,” said I, “take some compassion upon a wounded stranger. If it is in your power send me some assistance, or I shall perish.”

“Holy Mother!” said one of them, drawing her companion nearer, “what a sight is this! How came you in this terrible situation? and who is that person before you drenched in blood?”

“That, lady,” replied I, “is a robber. Two of them fell upon me; the one you see lies there, and the other has escaped.”

“Is he near this place?” said the other lady, looking round with a fearful eye and a changing countenance. “Let us hasten, Virginia, to send some assistance. Whence come you, Cavalier?”

“I am an officer,” replied I, “I came from

Tolosa, where I have a friend, if you will have the goodness to send for him."

"It is fifteen miles from here to Tolosa, and you must have assistance sooner," answered the lady.

"I am certain," returned I, "that I walked from Tolosa to this place in half an hour."

"Poor Cavalier!" said Virginia, "let us make haste, Almira; he is already lightheaded, and may die before we can get any assistance."

They hastened away, leaving me not knowing what to think, or how it was possible that I could have walked so great a distance in so short a time, unless my senses had been under some powerful delusion.

In about a quarter of an hour they returned with several servants, who made a litter of boughs, upon which I was placed, after taking a cordial from the fair hands of Virginia; who seemed to take particular interest in my situation, and charmed me with the sympathising tenderness of her disposition.

With some difficulty the servants carried me amongst the low underwood of the thicket, which spread and extended into a forest; in the midst of which we arrived at a large gothic building of considerable magnificence. Its gloomy turrets frowned over the waving landscape, and seemed to nod defiance to the black mountains of Sierra Morena, which arose behind it.

A chamber was allotted me by the ladies, under the direction of a silver-headed domestic; and a servant dispatched to Tolosa to inform my friend of the accident, and to bring a surgeon to my assistance.

In the mean time I felt myself considerably relieved, from the prospect I had of tranquility, and the nourishment I had taken. I inquired of the servant that attended me, who was the owner of the castle, and what was its name.

"It is called," answered he, "the Castle of Montillo, and the name of his Excellenza is Don Tevario Padilla."

"Don Padilla!" repeated I, in surprise: "is this the castle of Don Padilla?"

"Do you doubt it?" said the servant. "What is there wonderful in that?"

"O nothing! I only thought it strange that I should have rambled so far. Is Don Padilla at home?"

"No," answered he, "he has gone to take his usual journey to Grenada. Perhaps you might not have been so welcome had he been here."

"Why so, friend? How soon do you expect him?"

"He usually stays a month; and now he has been gone a fortnight."

"I suppose these ladies are his daughters?—they are very fine women."

"Aye, aye, Cavalier," returned he with a broad grin, "'tis a pity you could not get here without this ugly adventure; I warrant we should have had fine sport now his Excellenza is away. I am sure the castle is more like a dungeon than any thing else eleven months in the year."

"I suppose you have not many balls and feasts when he is present?" said I, "I understand he is very melancholy." This I had gathered from the description I had of him by our host De Tormes; and make no doubt but this was the man the villains had mentioned. To my interrogation the servant replied:

"Melancholy, Cavalier! why he's worse than melancholy, he's stark mad at times! then woe to poor Miguel if he comes in the way! And as to dances, and these sort of things, O Lord! why we never dare move a foot about the house, but as if we were walking to a funeral; unless when his Excellenza wants any thing, and then we must fly, quick, flash, like lightning, at the turn of his hand. Then if he was to see any of us laugh, he flies into such a plaguy passion, you would think we had robbed him."

"But can you give no account for this disposition—it surely cannot be natural?"

"In my opinion it is the most unnatural humor in the world; and I believe its this old gloomy dungeon of a place. Do you know it puts me quite in the horrors myself; I a'nt like the same as I was when I first came here. Then there are such stories about its dark and winding stairs and passages, empty chambers, gloomy dungeons, and terrible phantoms, that it would make your hair stand on end to hear them. There's old Gonzalez knows a pretty many of them; but he's a close dog, hum's and ha's for an hour, and then ends with a shrug and a nod."

I inquired if he had ever seen any of those phantoms he mentioned? he replied,

"I can't say that I have; but I have heard groans enough to curdle the blood in my veins. Then they say that the clashing of swords, and shivering of armor may be frequently heard in the east side of the castle, which has been shut up this twenty years and not a soul is allowed to enter any of the chambers; though for that, I believe, if the doors were set wide open, nobody would have the least curiosity, unless it were the ladies. They to be sure, once or twice asked the keys of his Excellenza, but they might as well have asked for his whiskers!"

"Is Don Padilla married?" inquired I.

"No, no," said Miguel, "he has been twice married already: but for that matter he wanted to be so a third time, but Donna Isabella did not like to venture, after what had happened to his first wives."

"What did happen, Miguel," said I, "is not death a common accident?"—"Yes, yes; but then the manner is sometimes different. Now, for my part, I should like to die in my bed; and you, as a soldier, would like to die in a battle, or so—"

"Not altogether," replied I, smiling; "but

what was there particular in the death of Padilla's wives?"

"Nay, Cavalier, I did not say there was any thing particular—report is never to be believed, or else to be sure if one was to believe report, things were bad enough. But I do not like talking; and to say the truth, if what I have already said were to come to his Excellenza's ears, I must troop from the castle. Nobody knows for certain, unless, it is old Gonzalez; and he's almost as silent as my lord. He 'll sit for whole hours, and say nothing to any mother's soul of us. I would give any thing to know as much as he knows."

I began to be tired of the loquacity of Miguel, who seemed willing to tell every thing which I had no wish to hear; and finding an inclination to sleep, I desired he would do as he had intimated, and leave me.

It was some hours before I awoke; when I found myself considerably revived, and the confusion of my head tranquilized. On opening my eyes, I beheld my friend Fernando sitting by me—his countenance pale as death. He would not suffer me to be awakened on his arrival; judging well, that rest was as necessary for me as medicine.

The surgeon then came in, and, having examined my wound, assured me that in a very few days I might leave my chamber. "I am very glad of it," said Fernando, "as his presence at Madrid will be necessary as soon as possible."

"What business requires me there?" said I; "have you heard then?"—"Heard what?" demanded he, with an inquiring look, "Have you received any news from Madrid?"

"Ah! my dear friend," answered I, "you have received an account of my father's death, and fear to alarm me by an hasty disclosure; but it was known to me some hours since."

"You surprise me," said he; "the courier arrived at Tolosa but a moment before we came from thence. I dismounted to break open the packet.

When I arrived here, I found you asleep, and was told you had been so near two hours: how then is it possible you could have received these tidings!"

"I knew it last night at Tolosa," replied I; "but at a more convenient opportunity I will explain." He immediately comprehended me, and remained silent.

In the evening I found myself so much recovered, that I desired Fernando would come and sit with me; and, under pretence of family concerns, we admitted no visitor. I then explained to him the strange circumstance of the preceding night, which increased his melancholy air.

"This, my dear Albert," said he, "is no common business; but why you and I should be selected as instruments confounds me. 'Tis true, that this Don Padilla is an uncle of mine, he was my mother's youngest brother, and, if his daughters die without issue, I am his sole heir. I have also a dormant claim upon this very estate; but as I never heard that my family had received any particular injury from him, I did not wish to enter into any process, which would appear as unnatural on my part. His first wife died suddenly when I was very young—I believe it was from a surfeit at a feast; and then he married again in a shorter time than was decent."

"Do you remember the name of the first lady?" inquired I.

"Her name was Emyra: if I remember right, she was daughter to the then governor of Lima."

"Holy Heaven!" exclaimed I, "are you certain, my friend, in what you say? If so she was my mother's sister.—A sister whom she has long lamented as swallowed up in an earthquake with her husband, after herself, who was the elder sister, returned to Spain, and was married to the Marquis my father. But how could she have remained unknown in Spain?"

"That is very easily accounted for," answered Fernando. "Don Padilla never leaves this re-

treat. My mother was his sister. My father died a few months after his marriage, and my mother at the hour which gave me birth. Thus I was left to the protection of guardians; and was educated at the castle of the Marquis de los Velos, to whose interest, before his death, I owed the commission I now enjoy, till I shall be of age to claim my father's property. My information relative to Don Padilla is vague. I know only that a little after his sister's death, after having run through his fortune, he went abroad an extravagant spendthrift. In our western colonies he contrived to repair his fortune, by means which are unknown; and, when he returned, he disclaimed all connection with his relations, from motives of resentment at their former refusal to supply his extravagance, and from that moroseness of disposition which, I am informed, renders his life a burden to himself. He had two daughters, I was told, very fine women; but, till this day I had never the pleasure of seeing them."

I inquired, who was the lady he had made his second wife?

"He married a lady from Grenada, about the time of Philip's persecution of the Moors," replied he; "but here I know no more, than that she died in less than a twelvemonth, leaving a daughter, the Lady Almira."

"What you have informed me," said I, "opens to me new scenes. Were you not very much frightened at my singular absence?"

"I had more reason to be frightened than you may imagine," said he. "You know what strange forebodings hung upon my mind: and when I did sleep, it was oppressive and heavy. Images of unconnected forms filled my mind, and harassed my imagination. Methought that the figure of the wounded soldier stood over me, with anger in his countenance, and I heard him pronounce my name. I fancied I awoke, and he stood beside me.

"Fernando," said he, "what regard do you pay to your promises! My service never interrupts your occupations. Rise! rise! your friend is far hence! If he falls revenge him, for he is in my service! Behold me! mark me! know me!" cried he in a louder voice; and throwing open his soldier's dress, I beheld beneath it a Moorish robe stained with blood, which appeared even then to trickle down from several wounds. I turned away my eyes with horror, and was so agitated, that I awoke in reality from this double dream; and, starting from my bed, went immediately to awaken you. My agitation and terror was extreme when I found you absent. Then all the warning of the phantom of my mind arose into reality: I believed that you were certainly murdered: and I uttered a cry of despair, which alarmed the house.

"After searching every part of the inn, I despatched several messengers round the town and its environs with very little hope: for it appeared to me above comprehension, that you should have left your room, and the inn, and yet all the doors remain fastened. From my anxiety I was relieved by the arrival of your messenger. I think, however, we may both learn that some event of strange incident hangs over us."

"That admits of no doubt," replied I: "it is not for trifles the usual order of nature is interrupted. If I were superstitious I might now fancy Almonzor to be a magician; but, as I said before, any man might make the same guesses, with the same certainty of truth: this, however, is very different. The spirit of the dead, for important reasons, may be permitted to appear; but no man can be supposed to have power to call up an evil spirit, or the soul of a departed human being at his pleasure, to satisfy an idle and impious curiosity: as little probable is it, that any finite creature can be master of future events."

"I am of your opinion," replied he: "but

what am I to do? Am I to charge Padilla with the murder of I know not who? How am I to bring proof of such a charge?"

"We must wait," answered I. "Singular events have brought us to this castle, at a time when admission was alone possible: for I am informed, that his jealousy, or his conscience, prevents him ever opening his gates to strangers. I have been told very strange reports are circulated about the next range of apartments; at present, I am not fully informed: but, if possible, we will examine that side of the building. I am now considerably interested; as well from the adventure of the assassin, as by what I have now learnt from yourself regarding my mother's sister."

The attention that I received from my friend, and the fair sisters, in a few days restored me so far as to be able to walk about my chamber; but though the wounds of my body were amended, I found that my heart had received an impression not so easily to be remedied; though I concealed from Virginia that I was the son of her mother's sister.

My friend encouraged me to hope, by repeating to me many little things Virginia had said in my favor to her sister and himself: "And," added he, laughing, "I believe I have made some progress in the affection of my cousin Almira."

"I congratulate you," said I; "that will be acting like a man. She is a little better than a picture."

"I allow her merit," answered he; "but fancy you know is every thing with a lover, and I do not believe I shall ever sincerely love, till I find a lady resembling this charming picture."

"At these words he took it from his bosom, where it always hung, and gazed upon it with pleasure. "There is certainly some little likeness," said he, "in the general outline, between this and my cousin Almira; but then she is by no means finished a creature."

While he was thus speaking, old Gonzalez had entered the room without our noticing him; his eye glancing upon the picture, he smiled; and putting back his white locks, "Ah, Chevalier," said he, "you are a happy man, you wear your mistress in your bosom: will you favor an old man with the sight of a young beauty? I have seen many a fair flower bloom and wither: I am now withered myself, for that matter, but yet it pleases me to look at a pretty face."

"Look upon this then," said Fernando, "and tell me if you ever saw a prettier." The old man then took the portrait in his hand, and gazing upon it, stood motionless, while the tears trickled from his eyes in large drops.

"Why is this?" said Fernando, somewhat surprised. "Why do you weep, my friend?"

"Forgive me," answered he; "forgive an old man who is full of fanciful conceits: that picture brought former times to my recollection—days long ago gone away."

"But what circumstance does this picture recall, Gonzalez, that you weep? Does it remind you of any one you knew?"

"Ah, Cavalier," said he, shaking his head, "I could shew you a picture exactly like it in the picture gallery; it was accounted an admirable likeness of my late mistress the mother of Lady Almira; but it is somewhat older than this portrait represents. Is this lady alive, Senor?"

Fernando who was sinking fast into reflection, was aroused at this question; which he did not expect.

"I know not," replied he, "whether she is or no; but could you not oblige me by shewing me the picture gallery? You have raised my curiosity for you know we are always interested by trifles, if they relate to ourselves."

Gonzalez looked at Fernando, repeating, "By trifles, Senor!"—"Yes, trifles," answered Fernando: "do you consider it a great favor to shew me these pictures?"

"Aye, that was not what we were saying," replied Gonzalez. "Well, well," said Fernando, "never mind what we were saying; will you lead me thither now we shall have sufficient time before the sun sets. I never did see my aunt living, and now I should like to see her resemblance."

"Your aunt!" repeated Gonzalez, in apparent surprise; "was Lady Zidana your aunt? Holy Father! is it possible?"

"I assure you I speak truth," replied Fernando. "Did you not know that I am of the family of the Coello's, and that Don Padilla was—"

"Yes, yes, now I remember," answered he; "but it is very singular. If you will follow me, Senor, and make but little noise, we will go by the back passages. Servants are so curious, and so fond of the marvellous that any thing in a large gothic building like this excites their wonder."

I would willingly have accompanied them, but I feared too much exertion; and I doubted not but my friend might gain more information alone, this cautious domestic not being easily induced to general confidence.

After traversing several dark and winding passages, they entered a large room very elegantly furnished in the old Spanish style. Antique tapestry covered the walls, along which ranged a number of whole length pictures of generations long since mouldered into dust. At the upper end of the gallery appeared two large gilt frames, and, in place of painting, a curtain of black silk hung down, exactly covering the canvass.

"There," said Gonzalez, "are the pictures of his Excellenza's two wives. He never can bear to look upon them since they are dead; and to prevent his *feelings* being shocked, he has thus hung them in mourning. Shall I draw the veil, Senor? This is the Lady Emira, Don Padilla's first wife: she is a very fine person; she died very young, Senor."

"That remark," said Fernando, "reminds also, that she died suddenly. You knew her; Gonzalez?"

The old man replied, "She did die suddenly, Senor, very suddenly. I was not then at the castle: I have, however, been informed, that she died by a surfeit at a feast."

"That was a common report, you know whether it was true?"—"And why should you doubt it Senor?"—"I have my reasons, Gonzalez: they are buried here, (laying his hand upon his bosom.) You know I am Don Padilla's nephew, the Marquis de Denia is nephew to this lady---can you suppose ours an idle curiosity?"

"Ah Senor," replied Gonzalez, mournfully, "we must not trust our senses in this world. I hear, and see, and am silent. Of things which we cannot prove, 'tis best to hear and see, and say nothing."

"But many incidents, which singly are nothing," said Fernando, "added together, may bring a volume of proof, proof deep and irresistible!"

"Then eternal truth will appear, and the injured receive atonement," said Gonzalez. "And murderers," cried Fernando, "receive the reward of their black malignity." "Do you know then," said Gonzalez, looking round him with fearful apprehension: "Do you know then, Senor, any thing that can lead you to such a suspicion? We have got upon a very strange subject?"

"I have reason: the reports that I have heard relating to the eastern part of this building, the strange melancholy of Don Padilla, this dagger," cried he, taking from his dress the dagger he had found in the Moorish ruin, and presenting its rusty point to Gonzalez, who started back affrighted at the sight.

"Ha! Fernando!" said he, "where did you meet that weapon? the enchasure of gold down the blade is remarkable. It was brought from New Spain."

"I understand you," replied Fernando admiring the discretion of this old man. "This dagger was wrapped in a Moorish habit, stained with blood: now dare you trust me, when you have this dreadful credential of confidence?"

"What am I to say? Of the death of Lady Emira I know nothing positive. At that time I lived with my lady Zidana in Grenada. I had a sister, named Teresa, who lived in this castle, and was waiting-maid to Lady Emira.

Don Padilla never treated this lady, since their return from New Spain, with that kindness her goodness deserved: he was always pretending to be jealous of her, though Heaven knows how unjustly! for she never set her foot out of the castle from the first day she entered it, except perhaps, a little walk in the woods.

"You may easily suppose, Senor, what sort of a life this was for a young and beautiful lady to lead; and had it not been for the playfulness of her little infant Virginia, it would have been sad indeed."

Fernando ventured to remind him, that he was now straying from the point.

"You are right," said he. "I might dwell for days on these subjects, if I gave loose to the inclinations of my tongue. The jealousies of Don Padilla became every day more insupportable; and his threats to confine her wholly in the castle, rendered her life very unhappy. About this time the persecutions of Philip broke out, and he was frequently absent for weeks, nobody knew whither. He arrived suddenly one night at the castle in better spirits than usual; and surprised my lady with requesting she would order a little entertainment, as he intended supping with her that night. They supped by themselves, attended only by my sister Teresa. Lady Emira was in excellent spirits, and Don Padilla in seeming good humor. Seeming, I call it, because I cannot think these sudden changes natural: we do not change from bad to good in an hour, Senor."

"Very well, go on," said Fernando, impatiently.

"After supper my lady was suddenly taken ill; Don Padilla would have it, she had overforced her appetite; but whatever it was, she died the same night. Listen, Senor! did you hear any noise?"

"No," answered Fernando; "what should we hear!"

"I know not," said Gonzalez, listening; "but for some time after the ladies' death, there were noises, very strange, and very unaccountable heard."

"Did no suspicion arise at the sudden death of Emira?" said Fernando: did it create no inquiry?"

"This part of Spain was at that time all in alarm—most men had sufficient business of their own to attend: but you shall hear. Lady Emira was laid out on a bed of state: I could shew it you now if I had the keys of those chambers. Several of the neighboring people were invited to see her, and Don Padilla made them remark that she was very little changed by death: but this did not silence all suspicion. My sister nearly broke her heart lamenting for her mistress, and was with difficulty kept from constantly remaining in the room till the day of her funeral. The corpse was removed into another chamber, where it lay in state: and Padilla took the key of the chambers, where his lady had before resided, into his own possession, and would not permit a thing to be touched. On the fourth day, in the evening, the coffin was screwed down, in presence of all the domestics; who, with tears in their eyes, took a last look at their mistress. It was interred in dusk of the evening in the chapel vaults belonging to the castle, and Don Padilla retired to his own apartment in visible agitation of mind.

"Old Pedro, who was then steward, and had a great affection for his lady, took it into his head that she was not dead, and that Don Padilla had

only buried her with a sleeping potion, for which purpose he watched for three successive nights at the entrance of the chapel; but all remained uninterrupted, and he was satisfied of the certainty of his lady's death. But now, Senor, I am to relate to you a circumstance to me unaccountable, and which I fear will never be explained till the day when many foul secrets will come to light. My sister Teresa, who was inconsolable for the loss of her mistress, could not rest in one place, but wandered from room to room as if in search of something she had lost. She had put little Virginia to bed after the funeral, and stole towards the apartments of her late lady. She knew that Don Padilla was in his own room, and she ventured, from curiosity, perhaps, to try the outer door. It opened, and she entered the rooms, where every thing remained as she had left it.

“The desolate air of the deserted chambers inspired her with superstitious fear. The sun had been some time gone down, and every object was indistinctly seen, so that she almost trembled as she stepped over the floors: and would have returned had not some unknown impulse urged her on. At last she came to the little bed-chamber where Emira used to sleep in the absence of her husband. The door stood ajar, and she ventured to push it open, when she beheld the figure of her late mistress kneeling at the foot of a little table, on which was placed a crucifix. Her lips seemed to move, and her features were paler than death. Teresa stood motionless at the sight, and had neither power to speak or move; when she was suddenly grasped by some person behind her, and fell senseless on the ground.

“This person was Don Padilla; who carried her himself into the great hall, and commanded the servants to put her to bed. On her recovery she found herself in her own room, with me sitting beside her: for I had that very evening arrived at the castle to take her back to Grenada.

When she recovered her senses, she informed me of these incidents: but the last appeared to me so strange, that I knew not what to think; especially when I considered the uncertainty of twilight, and the disturbed mind of Teresa."

"She must certainly have been deceived," said Fernando: "it could not be her mistress—and it was a singular posture for a ghost."

"I know not," replied Gonzalez, "my mind is bewildered with the circumstance: for from that night to this I have never seen my sister."

"You dream surely," cried Fernando: "it was not your sister, but Lady Emira who died."

"I am well aware of that," replied he. "After what Teresa had told me, I left her to make some inquiries amongst the servants—she slept alone—and in the morning her room was found empty: and no account could be learnt of her from that hour to this."

"That is singular indeed," said Fernando, fixing his eyes steadily upon Gonzalez: "what do you suspect?"

"Ah, Senor," said he, shaking his head, "what can one suspect in such a case? She must have been spirited away by Don Padilla, to prevent her telling secrets he had no mind should be known."

"But what secrets could she tell? she did not know that her lady was poisoned. You say, she saw her buried with her own eyes, and, to say the truth, in this instance I am apt to think her imagination deceived her."

"It might be so," said the old man, with a doubting air: "but her absence is no deception. However, let us now look at a second picture, before the sun is wholly lost behind the black waving forest. There, Fernando, there is a charming creature!"

"Charming, indeed!" cried Fernando, starting back with surprise: "'tis the very exact resemblance of this portrait—what an heavenly coun-

tenance! This lady was your mistress, I think? Did she live long with Padilla?"

"Only two years, Senor, she was then lost to us."

"Lost to you! is she not dead?"

"I fear she is," replied Gonzalez, putting his hands to his eyes: "but in what way nobody knows."

"She did not die of a surfeit! You know her story, do you not?" said Fernando: "I have particular reasons to wish for some information, as this picture I wear may inform you. Come to the chamber where my friend the Marquis de Denia is confined: on the word of a Spaniard you may depend on our honor."

"I will attend at twelve," replied Gonzalez: "the servants will then be at rest."

Fernando, after gazing some time upon the picture of Lady Zidana, which the rays of the setting sun gilded and enlivened, returned to inform me of this long conversation, and to advance a thousand suspicions. The sudden loss of Teresa, and in so particular a manner, seemed to stamp guilt upon the death of Emira: but it was, without trace, and affording no clue to conviction, served only to stimulate our interest.

We were interrupted by a gentle strain of sweet music, which stole upon the evening breeze. Fernando opened the casement, which overlooked the gardens of the castle now overshadowed with twilight. We listened to the music which came upon the wind, and were charmed with the tender expression of the composition, which was a Spanish love song. When the music ceased we felt disappointed, waiting at the window for a returning sound. We did not judge wrong in supposing it to be the ladies, who had entertained themselves with this innocent amusement, in the pleasant shades of the gardens: and we soon after saw them appear, the one with a lute, the other with a bandola.

We saluted them from the window, and they returned the compliment though it was too late to see their faces distinctly.

This little incident served to make them the subject of our discourse: and the difference of their manners from those of their father, while they had his example before them, and felt the influence of his power, drew forth our praise

CHAPTER V.

Oh! mischief thou art quick
To enter in the thoughts of desperate man.

AT the appointed time we heard a rap at our door, and, opening it, old Gonzalez entered, looking round him with caution. Having closed the door, "I have brought us a bottle of wine," said he: it will be a refreshment, and help our spirits at this solemn hour, when the inhabitants of the grave are abroad."

We each took a glass, and, being seated, requested him to inform us what he knew of Lady Zidana.

"She is, or was," said he, "as you may judge by the name, of Moorish lineage: but her ancestors having frequently intermarried with the natives of Spain, the flatness of the Moresca features is done away. She was married very early in life to Count Ferendez, by whom she had a daughter. She lived with her lord in the greatest harmony, at their castle on the banks of the Darro."

"I believe," remarked Fernando, interrupting him, and looking towards me, "that castle is now in ruins."

"Alas! Senors," replied the old man, "well I know it, and Don Padilla knows it. It was,

twenty year ago, the most magnificent in the country. Some of the great rooms were built of marble; and the fountains of water cooled the heat of the air. Don Padilla had known my lord the Count Ferendez in early life; for at that time Count Ferendez was as gay and extravagant as himself.

“At the first visit Don Padilla made to our castle, he saw and admired my lady. I had my eyes upon him, and was not long in discovering the attention he paid her; but whether my lady gave him a dismissal in private, or he acted from deeper policy, I know not, but we had little of his company till the edict of Philip destroyed at once all the connections of families and friends. All the Moorish families were at once reduced to beggary and exile. Nothing but the most dreadful distress was to be seen. Count Ferendez assembled his dependents with intent to resist the army of the court; but his incapacity of means was every hour more visible; and certain and dreadful destruction hung over him and his household. He would not change his religion, as several persons of rank were already to do, and he awaited with resignation the threatening storm.

“While things were in this state, Don Padilla arrived, at midnight, with two soldiers his only attendants. He was a long time closeted with the Count, and I could gather no more of their conversation than by the effects which followed. Count Ferendez the same night set out for the castle of Montillo, carrying with him a number of jewels, and disguising himself under the dress of one of the soldiers; both of them accompanying him as a guard.”

Fernando groaned at this observation, but remained silent: Gonzalez continued.

“I understood that Padilla had offered him the asylum of this castle, till he might procure a purchaser for his estates, or joined his brother in Africa: while my lady Zidana, and her little daughter should remain at a secret residence in Grenada-

da, till she could conveniently follow. Be this as it would, my unfortunate master never reached this castle. He was murdered, barbarously murdered on the road; but whether by an accidental rencontre with some straggling party of soldiers, or whether——”

The clock struck twelve, and Gonzalez paused to dry a tear from his cheek, and compose the perturbation of his mind.

“What you have told us,” said I, “is strange; it forms a ground for terrible suspicions. Did you see those soldiers to whose care Don Padilla delivered your master?”

“Not fully,” replied Gonzalez. “They were introduced in so cautious a manner, that I caught but a faint glance as they passed; but I have since thought, they had more the appearance of assassins than of regular soldiers.”

“Have these men ever appeared since?” inquired Fernando.

“Never, Senor, to my knowledge,” replied he. “It was said they had never been found any more than my lord.”

“That is most strange!” said I. “What proof then have you beyond suspicion? or how came this to your knowledge without some witness.”

“It was not in the nature of things, that my master should forsake his wife and daughter.—He departed at the dead of the night—he has never been seen since; but the soldier’s dress he had on was found in the wood near this castle, torn and bloody. What greater proofs are needful?”

He had scarcely pronounced the last word, when we were all startled by the great clock again striking twelve. “What can this mean?” said Fernando, turning pale.

“Ah, Senor,” replied Gonzalez, calmly, “that is a supernatural intimation: these omens are frequent—they stir up recollection, and prevent black actions from slipping over the memory. I have things to relate yet more terrible, and more strange, than a warning like this.”

"Go on then," said I: and he thus continued:

"Don Padilla conveyed my lady and her daughter to Grenada, where he left them; and, giving me directions to secure the most valuable moveables, and bring them to my master at his castle, I obeyed. On my arrival at this place, judge, Señors, my surprise; it was then that I learnt all at once the death of Lady Emira. The murder of my master, and the loss of my sister quickly followed. It was with difficulty I supported myself under so much distress: and, had not my mind been hardened by the examples of equal misery, which every hour crowded upon me, I should certainly have sunk beneath it.

"My suspicions were great and strong; but prudence locked them in my own bosom. I watched the dark looks of Padilla, and thought I could read the fate of my master in his countenance: but such a suspicion I dared not breathe to myself.

"The old steward, Pedro, was a man who had caught much of his master's gloom, and I suspected knew some of the secrets, which determined me to guard my expressions. I had not been many days in the castle, when passing one evening along a dusky gallery, I heard the sound of voices as in anger. I listened, and could distinguish the tones of supplication, and the threats of a person in rage; but the subject I could not at all hear—a word or two being all I could learn in a sentence: from which I judged, that the supplicating person had made some discovery which was of importance. In about half an hour they parted; and I concealed myself in a dark corner, that I might not be seen. Pedro came out, his lips pale, his knees trembling, and his eyes staring wildly: he passed on with a quick and hasty step, as if he was pursued by some frightful apparition.

"He had not reached the end of the gallery when Padilla came out. This was the first time I had ever seen him enraged; and, gloomy as was my situation, his frightful frown and glowing eyes

struck me with horror. "Pedro," cried he, in a voice of thunder; at which the unhappy wretch started nearly to falling. "Pedro, come here!—were you in Peru, villain, I would grind you into powder!—obey my words. This is the last night you remain in these walls. I shall send a *guide* with you to your relations in Murcia. Haste, and never appear before my sight—unless you would have that I should strike you dead at my feet!" Pedro threw himself upon the ground and entreated forgiveness. "If," said he, "I may be pardoned, never shall my lips——"

"No," cried Padilla, changing countenance; "*Never shall thy lips betray me.—Do you know me? If you do, arise and prepare to be gone.*" With these words he strode back to the room, the door of which he jarred to, with a force which resounded along the gallery.

"Pedro appeared confounded with terror. I dared not quit my station; as I knew not the consequences that might ensue from a discovery of my having been witness to such a scene, in a castle where violence seemed to reign. Pedro withdrew in disorder, and I quitted my station with caution.

"I had various conjectures in my own mind on this occasion; and imputed the rage of Don Padilla to the suspicions Pedro had expressed in watching at the entrance of the chapel. Be that as it would, Pedro left the castle the same night."

"How do you know he *left it*?" said Fernando.

"Because he was not to be found the next morning."

"That might be," replied Fernando, with a groan. "Merciful Heaven! what thoughts crowd upon me!—Proceed."

"The next morning Don Padilla called me to his room. "You were a faithful servant, Gonzalez, to my lost friend," said he: "you shall not suffer by his unfortunate death, if you will serve

me as you did him. My old steward, Pedro, left me last night to retire into Murcia amongst his relations."

"His relations!" muttered I, before I recollected myself.

"Aye, his relations," repeated he in a lofty voice, and cying me with a keen look. "Do'nt you think, honest Gonzalez, 'tis a comfortable thing to retire in your old age amongst your friends? If you serve me faithfully I will provide for you in the same way."

"Heaven forbid!" thought I, but I said nothing except observing that I did not consider myself as discharged from my duty to my lady."

"Nor I either," replied he, with a grim smile. "The fine castle, Gonzalez, is buried in ruins by the king's troops; your lady is coming to live in my castle, and I will protect her with my life."

"And her little daughter, your Excellenza?"

"Yes, yes, both: I am the protector of all related to my unfortunate friend the Count. Hear me, Gonzalez! I am in two days going to Grenada; I shall bring your lady hither, and give you in charge to see the chambers of my late wife prepared and decorated. You are, from this time, my steward in the place of Pedro."

"It was with a heavy heart I entered on this office; not a little perplexed in my own mind with the direction I had received, to fit up the Lady Emira's rooms: but yet I had no idea that Padilla would ever prevail on my mistress to marry him. He, however, knew too well the power he now possessed; and, as I have learnt, he mingled threats with persuasion; and, moved, at length, by the picture he drew of her own poverty, and the misery she would entail upon her little daughter, he prevailed upon her to give a reluctant consent. I received this tidings with sorrow: being obliged to prepare for the solemnization of this unballowed marriage at this Castle of Montillo."

"In about a week my lady arrived: the deep-

est melancholy was fixed upon her countenance; and it was easy to see that grief lay heavy at her heart. She retired with her daughter to the apartments prepared, and shutting herself in, gave way to grief. Pity was all I had to bestow, as I had not even an opportunity of speaking.

“Don Padilla hastened the preparations; and to cover a bad action by a blaze of splendor, invited many of the neighboring nobility to be present at the nuptials.

“The long gallery was filled with musicians, and the company were invited to dance before the supper should be served. Lady Zidana was dressed in white, with a plume of black feathers as a tribute to her lord. She resisted all the invitations of Don Padilla to dance; who, to say the truth, exerted himself in every point to please her, and drive from her features that grief which, in spite of her efforts, was but too visible.

“The dances occupied the evening, and it was almost twelve o'clock before the company assembled in the large gothic hall to supper. Several musicians were placed there upon a temporary stage, and such of us as could be spared from attending the company, contrived to witness this elegant assemblage of all that seemed beautiful, rich, and grand. The number of officers dressed in their uniforms, and mingled with the variegated company, added much to the sight. They took their seats amidst universal mirth, and a general good humor prevailed. Little did they think in what way it was to be interrupted!

“The tables were heaped with the choicest viands; and wine of different sorts stood in goblets for the accommodation of the guests. The music played in lively strains, echoing through the lofty fretwork of the gothic hall; and nothing seemed capable of interrupting the universal festivity—when the great clock of the castle struck one.

“At that moment a fearful cry was heard, as if resounding from every part of the castle, and per-

vading every ear with indscribable fear.—It seemed like the cry of murder, mingling with an eastern blast. The company all started, and gazed upon each other in silent consternation. The tapers which blazed upon the tables, and in branches along the walls, suddenly expired ; and from a scene of brightness and splendor, arose the deepest darkness and distress. The music suddenly ceased—the company rose in dismay, crowding through the avenues leading from the hall in the greatest distress several of the ladies fainting with affright.

“ It was impossible to distinguish persons in this general confusion, and I concealed myself in the tapestry hangings in the first emotions of fear. In a very few minutes no person remained in the banqueting hall, except Don Padilla, his new married lady, and myself. The mingling sounds of the flying company were subsided into a death-like silence, and the tapers as suddenly re-lighted as they had been extinguished ;—but now a more terrible object presented to our eyes.

“ The figure of the murdered Count Ferendez stood at the head of the table, facing Lady Zidana and Padilla ; he was clothed in the dress of a soldier, as he had quitted his castle ; he cast around him a glance of fierce inquiry darting as a sun-beam. My lady immediately fainted ; and the bloodless cheeks of Padilla, betrayed his fear.

“ The spectre gazed upon him a few momens “ Knowest thou me ? ” said he, in a hollow voice. Padilla’s lips trembled but he returned no answer. “ See,” said the spectre, the work of thine hand ? but how long shall these actions prosper ? ”

“ It was not I. My hand never raised itself against you,” faltered Padilla.

“ The spectre frowned. “ Can you deceive me now ! ” said he. “ Do I not know thy thoughts and thy actions.—But thy time is not yet—”

“ Padilla seemed to recover at these words. “ Away ! ” cried he, with rising firmness, “ thy threats and thyself are as shades ! ”

"The spectre raised his hand in a threatening posture—the same fearful cry sounded through the hall—the lamps were extinguished for a moment, and again re-lighted without hands.

"The mixture of passion expressed on the brow of Padilla made me tremble as I stood. He sat leaning his chin upon the palms of his hands, gazing upon the place where the spectre had been, as though he were still before him; while Lady Zidania lay on the ground unnoticed, and the feast remained on the tables unregarded.

"I wished to retreat, for I was sick with various emotions, but I trembled at being discovered. Don Padilla, after musing some time, suddenly started up, and pouring out a large goblet full of aqua vitæ, drank it off. It was now I endeavored to get away; but his alarm had given quickness to his hearing, he started, and turning suddenly around perceived me stealing along the side of the hall.

"Ha!" cried he, drawing his sword, "thou art no shade—but I will quickly make thee such!" He darted upon me, and dragging me by the throat along the ground to the table, lifted his sword to strike."

Here the old man paused, and looked round, as if apprehensive that Don Padilla was yet standing over him. The castle bell at that moment tolled—one. I shuddered at the melancholy sound, which was lengthened through the hollow apartments, and seemed to realize the dreadful scenes Gonzalez had impressed upon our minds.

For some time an awful silence prevailed; apprehension marked our features, and, taking each a glass of wine, Gonzalez continued.

"When Padilla perceived it was I, he quitted his grasp still holding his glittering sword to my throat.

"Gonzalez," said he, "is it you? Pedro was dismissed my service for a smaller crime. But, by my soul! I swear, that a second shall be the

forfeit of your life. Is it for such base wretches as thou art, to pry into the secrets of a man like me?—Hear me, villain ! this is the term on which I now let thee live--Conceal what thou hast seen in thy inmost soul ; dare not to whisper it to thyself. If ever I learn that thou dost, that day shall be to thee black with vengeance!”

“Nor shalt thou escape!” said a voice, at which we all rose in confusion and amazement.

“What can this mean?” cried Gonzalez, trembling ; “who can have overheard us?”

“It is some servant,” said Fernando, “whose idle curiosity has led him hither.”

He did not wait for more words, but leaping forward, he hastily opened the door, and ran along the corridor ; but he could distinguish no one, nor hear any retreating footstep. “This is truly astonishing,” said he, returning. “Had any person been there, I must have heard him.”

“What chambers are adjoining to these?” said I ; “possibly some person is concealed in them?”

“No, no,” replied the old man, very much agitated. “Beyond that wall, where the picture of the black and white knights is hung, are the ranges of the eastern wing, it is impossible any person could have entered there ; and on the other side are the chambers of this suite : leading to which they must pass your apartment.”

I endeavored to impute the voice we had heard to our own heated imagination ; though, at the same time, I did not conceive how it was possible the same delusion should deceive us all. It was with difficulty we prevailed on the old man to proceed--pausing every sentence, to listen.

“After this terrible threat, Don Padilla commanded me to assist him in carrying his new bride to her chamber ; swearing that all the fiends in hell should not deprive him of his prize, much less the perturbed spirit of a man murdered by robbers. I would have interposed with an observation, that my lady was not in a fit state to become a bridal

chamber; and, that I doubted much if she ever recovered.

"Fool! driveling idiot!" cried he, knitting his brows, "I ask thee not advice: living or dead, all the fiends in hell shall not deprive me of her!"

"Such, Senors, was the marriage of Lady Zidana, whose picture Fernando wears. From that hour she never recovered her spirits; and Don Padilla, after the birth of Lady Alunira, became disgusted at her reserve, and evidently hated her, more than he had ever loved her."

"What became of the daughter of Count Fernandez?" said Fernando.

"Don Padilla, after a very little time, found means to place her out at Grenada; and till my lady's death, it was believed she was well provided for: but, since then, I have never heard other than an uncertain report of her death: but how, Heaven alone can tell---or Don Padilla."

"Ha! I am certain I heard a noise," cried Fernando."

"Thou shalt not go unrewarded!" said the voice we had before heard, and which threw us into the greatest consternation.

We sought in vain to discover the mystery; sounding the walls to see where they were hollow, and examining every place where concealment was possible. There remained no longer a doubt but we had been observed and overheard, and that by an enemy; but who it could possibly be, we had no means to discover.

Gonzalez was very much affected, and we had much difficulty to tranquilize his terror, by assurances of our protection let what would happen.

"I have," said he, "this consolation, that my intentions are just; and I will trust that Heaven will not suffer the guilty always to triumph."

"You are very right," replied I; virtue and a right intention, will preserve us tranquil amidst danger; nor will Providence fail to bring ven-

geance on the guilty. Go now to rest, my good Gonzalez, your years require the nourishment of sleep; we are young and inured to hardship, we will watch; and, if the intruder dares to appear, he will find that, though weak, I have yet a soldier's arm!"

"Yes, yes," said Fernando, "an arm that has already dispatched one murderer to his grave, and I trust, would not fail in combating another."

After Gonzalez had retired, we spent several hours in reflecting and conversing on the singular and almost incredible events we had heard.

It appeared clear, that Don Padilla had been an actor in the tragedy of Count Ferendez; it was credible that passion might instigate him to the murder of his friend; but here were others, which arose in strange and fearful array. The death of Emira appeared more than suspicious; the sudden disappearance of Pedro and Teresa was equally unaccountable. His cruelty to Lady Zidana and her daughter, of whose fate we were ignorant, raised our detestation. But, though we could easily allow for any extravagance of human passion, our belief was staggered, and our senses confounded, when the wandering spirit of Count Ferendez crossed our thoughts; and we should have treated the whole as a chimera, had not our own experience staggered all the effects of a liberal education.

Fernando remained with me during the night, but it passed without interruption. On the following morning the body of the ruffian Lopez was buried on the spot where he had fallen; he having been for several days exposed to the view of visitors, that he might be claimed if known, but no owner could be discovered, nor any news learnt of his companion, who had made good his retreat so secretly, that, from the imperfect description I could give, no information could be gathered.

CHAPTER VI.

'Tis gone.

'Twas but my fancy, or perhaps the wind
Forcing his entrance thro' some hollow cavern.
No matter what---I feel my eyes grow weary.

Shakspeare.

ON the fifth day of my residence in the Castle of Montillo, I found myself so much recovered, that I ventured in the evening to walk in the garden, accompanied by Fernando and the ladies.

They seemed to take pleasure in leading us over this elegant little place, where a variety of exotic plants, with flowers from Peru and Mexico, flourished as in their native climes. Aromatic shrubs from Arabia were planted in *parterres*, and filled the air with the most delightful perfume: a clear and winding rill watered the groves, inviting to repose by its murmuring sound, and tempting the feet to rove amidst the freshness of evergreens. At the end of a grove of orange and citron trees, was a small arbor, formed of marble pillars, clear and beautiful as the Pærean stone: between these was a curious lattice work of gilt canes, which admitted at once the air and the light.

Roses and jessamines were entwined in the net work: and Persian geraniums, which yield a musky scent, crept along the base.

In this beautiful arbor were several fine paintings on fanciful subjects: and cushions of crimson velvet invited to repose.

"It is here," said Almira, "that my sister and I often pass the evening. How do you approve of our taste, Cavaliers?"

"Nothing," replied I, "can be more charming! On the right we see only objects of beauty, flowers interspersed with fruits and shrubs: on the left the mountains of Morena near up their frowning heads: and the turrets of the castle gloom

over the deep forest. Before us runs the limpid brook, babbling over pebbles it has polished to brightness. The air perfumed breathes freshness through these living lattices: but the most beautiful of nature's productions are the fair nymphs which preside in the temple."

Virginia replied only with a look and a blush: but Almira, laughing, answered, "You are extremely polite, Senor; but what is your opinion of those nymphs, cousin?"

Fernando replied, "my opinion is perfectly the same. Yet, to my taste there is something wanting to relieve the silence of the scene. Music, such as we heard the other night from some unseen performers, would render this a little fairy temple."

"If that be all," replied Almira, with an obliging air, it would be a pity you should not be satisfied with our favorite place—Sister, sing him the ballad that belongs to the painting there, facing the door, of the lady walking upon the sea."

"That is too long, sister," replied Virginia. "Beside, it is a doleful ditty, and fit only for melancholy people."

"Then pray oblige me with it," said Fernando.

"Are you then melancholy?" asked Virginia.

"I thought nobody could be sad but those who belonged to this castle."

"And why, cousin," said I, "should the inhabitants of this castle be more melancholy than others? Believe me, there are many heavy hearts under light countenances."

"Well, well," cried Almira, "that we do not doubt. Let us now have the song, sister: we will accompany it with our instruments. It is a very old story, Cavaliers; we learned it from a wandering ballad-singer, who learnt it from a Scotch prisoner at Carthage, and we made it the subject of that picture, where you see the lady walking on the waves, near those frightful rocks, almost as frightful as the black mountains above us."

After some little persuasion Virginia tuned her lute, and, accompanied by her sister on a guitar, entertained us with the simple ballad of which this is a copy.

HIALMER AND GERTRUDE.

A SCOTTISH BALLAD.

Softly dash'd the pensive ocean,
Gently sigh'd the passing gale,
To the rocks the flushing motion
Seem'd to tell a plaintive tale.

When a maid, at eve retiring,
Stray'd along the sandy shore,
And the lamp of day expiring,
Shed its glad'ning light no more.

Wanton in the wind and cheerless
Flow'd her loose and lovely hair;
Mild her look; but, ah! how peerless
Every motion of the fair!

Dress'd in weeds of saddest sable,
Dress'd in robes of mourning hue;
(Weeds to tell the mind unable,
Speak alone the sorrow due.)

Now she paused in thoughtful sadness,
Round she glanc'd her trembling eye,
Wild as touch'd with kindling madness,
Frowning at the low'ring sky.

Now advancing quick, now slowly,
Sudden starts betray'd her mind;
Then she to the ground bent lowly,
List'ning to the sighing wind.

On a rock that rough projected,
Where the ragged saphire grew;
And the blacken'd steep erected
Barriers to the rising view.

Careless sat the lovely maiden,
Careless on the sea-beat shore;
Sick at heart, with grief o'erladen,
She ne'er heard the waters roar.

"Here," she cried, "he used to meet me;
On this rock Hjalmer brave,
Oft at eve was wont to greet me
Ere he tried the trecherous wave.

O! my lov'd Hjalmer, never,
Never shall my soul forego,
Those fond ties that death would sever,
With the ruthless grasp of woe,

Love our hearts with bonds united,
Pure as is celestial flame;
Sacred as the truth we plighted,
In the holy Virgin's name.

Cruel, cruel death! to sunder
Two whose hearts together grew:
Could not some less noble plunder
Satisfy thy greedy view?

Brave and noble was my lover,
Bravest of the mountains brow;
Terror filled the lawless rover,
Shrinking from his threat'ning frown.

When the winds blew bleak and cheerless,
Howling o'er the heathy waste,
Then Hjalmer 'lone and fearless,
O'er the sword the robber trac'd.

Oft at midnight has he sallied
 On the proud and Danish foe;
 Oft his country's courage rallied,
 To return their vengeful blow.

Caladonia long shall mourn him,
 (He of all the chiefs the pride:)
 All their pray'rs can ne'er return him,
 Ne'er restore him to his bride.

He pursu'd the Danes embattled,
 O'er the black and faithless waves:
 Bark to bark the lances rattle,
 Wounds and death the warrior braves.

Nought could stay the direful clangor,
 Nought the rage that Scotia fir'd;
 Burning with revengeful anger,
 In the waves the Danes expir'd.

But the battle gain'd and over,
 Round the victors tempests sweep,
 Furious spirits o'er them hover,
 Adding terrors to the deep.

O! my lov'd Hialmer, hear me,
 Hear me in the silent main;
 With thy wonted accents cheer me,
 From the green and liquid plain.

Ah! what voice, or whisp'ring spirit,
 Does thy Gertrude faintly call?
 Who can sounds like these inherit?
 Sounds that tremble as they fall."

From the sea-bed undulating,
 Rose a mist of deepest blue;
 Spreading wide—then dissipating,
 Left a bodied form in view.

THREE SPANIARDS.

Thrice it Gertrude called, and, sighing,
Thrice it beckon'd to the maid;
Gertrude, with the call complying,
Hasten'd to the well known shade.

O'er the briny sands long pacing,
Where the sea-weeds gently wav'd;
Still the rocky mazes tracing,
By the rising billows lav'd.

She pursu'd the warrior, fleeting
Through the shades that night o'erspread;
Till the tide denied retreating,
And the rocks hung o'er her head.

Here he sudden paus'd and, bending
To the wild and frightful maid,
"Gertrude ! Gertrude ! this the ending,
This our bed of love," he said.

"Here beneath the waves transflucid,
Many a spirit happy dwells:
Amber groves, and domes pellucid,
Deck'd with weeds, and glitt'ring shells.

From retreats, where sea-nymphs daily,
Hymn their songs of love and war:
And the wand'ring spirits gaily,
Join in chorus from afar.

Haste then, Gertrude, haste my dearest,
'Tis Hialmer bids thee come:
Is it death, or waves thou fearest
In thy passage to the tomb?

Gradual then the spirit sinking,
Beckon'd with deceitful smile,
Gazing wild, nor longer thinking,
Loosen'd sands her feet beguile.

Plunging in the sorrowing ocean,
Ev'ry sense of danger fled :
And the wave's returning motion,
Clos'd forever o'er her head.

Oft when moon light's pensive lustre,
 Trembles on the curling pool,
 And the winds have ceas'd to bluster,
 Sighing faint at ev'ning cool,

Hand in hand, are seen to wander,
 O'er the deep, these spirits dear;
 As the billows smoothly meander,
 Now are seen, now disappear.

Or when black'ning tempests roaring,
 Threat to wash the bending skies:
 Gertrude's spirit loud deploring,
 Warns the seamen with her cries.

The air of this ballad was simple and pathetic; it reminded me of the stories of ancient times, when hapless maids had too frequently to deplore the sudden chances of a barbarous warfare. The subject of this tale afforded us matter for conversation: and we forgot the hours as they passed, till the sun had withdrawn his last ray, and left us in the stilness and soberness of night.

Almira then played us the evening Hymn, while I sat with Virginia, leaning against the lattice frame, and reflecting on the probability, that not many days would part us! and that I knew not if we should ever meet again. I sighed deeply at this reflection. Virginia looked on me with an expression that penetrated my heart, and spoke more than many sentences.

"Ah! my fair cousin," said I, taking her hand, when her sister had ceased to play, "what a delicious scene would this be if it were not transitory. My soul feels itself, and would willingly remain here, but how soon must it tear itself away!"

"And must you soon leave us?" said she, with an half-suppressed sigh. "Yes," replied I: "I am not ignorant, Virginia, of your father's disposition: it will be impossible we should remain after his arrival."

"Most true," returned she, looking down. "My father will be very angry that you were ever admitted; but he did not see you pale, bleeding, and wounded, or his heart might have pitied you."

"And did your heart then pity me, Virginia?" said I, with a feeling I had never before experienced, and which now I cannot define. I felt her hand flutter as I held it, but she returned me no answer; and, in that moment I formed the determination of making her my wife.

Almira endeavored, by a thousand little arts, to engage Fernando in particular conversation; but he had too much experience of the world not to perceive her partiality, and too much honor to encourage what he had no inclination to return. The charms he had painted in possessing an original, such as the picture of Lady Zidana, rendered all other insipid; though he would at times, join with me in ridiculing such a fancy. Beside, there appeared in his eyes, too much of Don Padilla in the features of Almira. But I see, my dear Marquis, I must be delicate on this point; and, perhaps, it is well for you both Fernando did not see with your eyes.

I endeavored, during this conversation, to strike out some means of corresponding with Virginia when I should be in Madrid; but none appeared possible, unless through the hands of Gonzalez—and I much doubted whether he would venture. It was easy to perceive that the interruption of last night had sat heavy on his mind; and he, no doubt, reproached himself with having inadvertently, betrayed a secret, which for so many years he had carefully guarded; and which, if known, would expose him to the worst vengeance of his master. I did not dare mention these suggestions to Virginia, much less the secret which related to her father; for, though both sisters wondered and lamented at his melancholy and morose disposition, they were far from entertaining any of those suspicions, which in our eyes appeared certainties.

It was almost dark before we could think of returning to the castle. Whilst we remained at supper, some dispatches arrived from Tolosa relative to the troops, which I gave Fernando instructions how to answer; and a private letter from my mother, which I retired to my chamber to read.

It contained a long detail of my father's sufferings during his last illness, his frequent wishes for my presence, and many family particulars, which required my speedy return to Madrid.

I became quite melancholy at the sorrowful sentiments it contained; and my mind giving itself up to a long series of thinking, I found my spirits become so dejected, that I knew not how to account for it.

Undoubtedly this imbecility of mind was principally occasioned by love. I know of no passion that more relaxes the mind, its chief pleasure consists in solitude and contemplation: to this I might add my mother's letter, which so unmanned me, that a thousand fancies floated in my brain.

The moon slowly advanced over the dark waving forest, and shed its beams through my casement. I arose from my chair to meditate on the solemn view, where nature enjoyed repose. The dark scenery, which in one huge mass extended before the window, spread over me a sensation of awe; and, for a time, I remained struck with the sublimity of my imagination. A faint and distant light aroused my attention; it moved slowly amongst the trees, and seemed to approach the castle.

I fancied I could perceive the figure of a man, whose ghastly features were shaded with horror by the dim light which he carried. He bent beneath a load, which seemed to own the human form; and the thought crossed my mind that it might possibly be the assassin Jacques, carrying away the dead body of his comrade, when he could venture with safety to tear it from the ground.

Something of fear crept over me at the remembrance of that eventful night, when I had so strangely received warning of my father's death, and so nearly received my own. I could not wholly avoid apprehension at the distant sight of a man whose dealings in blood I had so much reason to know; and I watched his motions with anxiety. The distance deprived me of certainty, and I lost him in an angle of the garden wall, along which he seemed to have taken his course.

I was greatly disturbed at this incident, as I knew not but I might run some danger from the revenge of this villain, who could not be ignorant of my residence in the castle. I leaned upon the casement of the window, revolving a thousand ideas: by degrees my mind assumed its tone, from reflecting, that the same Power which had hitherto, might continue to protect me.

The gentle sighs of the wind, which scarce waved the tops of the trees, seemed to whisper sad sounds: and I enjoyed in ecstasy, the pleasing sensations that crept over me. "Now," thought I, "if some heavenly choristers were to tune their instruments, and in sweet hymning, warble some celestial song, could the abodes of Paradise furnish a more pleasing pleasure."

I listened, as if expecting some strain would reach me on the breeze—but the wind came, and sighing passed away. A few stars glittered in the firmament, and I gazed upon them with awful satisfaction. "How magnificent is all this!" said I to myself: "worlds roll upon worlds, and harmony guides their course! What then is man, little and insignificant man, amidst all the grandeur of creation?"

My heart became heavy at this reflection. I withdrew from the window, and sat down upon a chair, leaning with my arms upon the table—every noise in the castle was hushed into silence. I remained fixed in my situation, having no inclination to sleep, and enjoying the sadness that hung in

clouds over me, when the clock struck twelve, reverberating with solemn sounds through the castle.

It reminded me of the eventful incidents Gonzalez had repeated, and I looked round with a sort of expectation, that some fearful form would start upon me through the duskiness of my chamber; for I had no other light than the rays of the moon, which scarcely rendered objects visible.

A partial ray fell upon an old picture, which hung on the side of the room that faced me. It was an ancient battle-piece; in which a tournament was exhibited before a lady, who stood by herself in the gallery of an interior court, the sole witness and arbiter of merit. The knights were one of them in black, the other in white armor. The black knight had driven his lance into the body of his opponent, and the blood trickled down the side of the white horse, on which the white knight rode. The light of the moon but faintly showed the coloring; and I remained leaning on the table, with my eyes steadily fixed upon the body of the falling knight.

While I thus continued to gaze, I fancied that the canvass moved, and that the wounded knight retreated backwards from the black knight, who pressed upon him.

The white knight continued slowly to retreat, and the black knight moved some paces backwards, as if to give velocity to his next onset. The delusion of my imagination was such that I did not perceive that the whole canvass slid back, parting in the centre, till my eyes were struck with the figure of a man standing in the vacancy. He looked into the chamber with caution; while his murderous countenance gleamed with a smile of malice, highly raised by the red glare of a lamp he held in his left hand—his right containing a poniard, on which my fancy (in the moment) observed marks of blood.

My hair almost stood erect on my head, and my blood ran chill to my heart, as I gazed upon the

horrid spectre, without power to move, or to determine whether it were human, or no.

He looked in my chamber with an inquiring eye, and particularly towards the bed: which, standing at the opposite end of the room, prevented his perceiving me, as I sat in the shade. Hearing no sound and not perceiving my lamp burning, he ventured slowly to step out into the room—the opening reached within two feet of the floor. He advanced with a slow pace towards the bed, pausing to listen, the dagger raised in his hand. He stood over the bed a minute, whilst a ghastly grin of satisfaction spread over his livid features, his eyes sparkled, and he raised his arm to plunge the poniard into his fancied victim.

I now clearly understood this was no incorporeal spectre. I was so overcome with the sense of the unexpected danger I had so narrowly escaped, that I groaned aloud; and, starting up with sudden animation, I rushed forward, drawing my sword in an instant. Had I proceeded with more caution, I might have laid him dead at my feet, without his having any power to assault me—he being only armed with a short poniard. Alarmed by the noise I made, his countenance changed, and starting round, he beheld my glittering sword within a yard of his throat.

He gave a sudden and masterly spring to one side, by which he avoided the sweep of my weapon; nor did he stay to hazard a second stroke, leaping through the aperture, where he narrowly missed being cut in two—the point of my sword divided the leathern belt he had round him.

I did not hesitate about following him through the private passage, along which he ran with surprising swiftness, continuing to carry the lamp. Notwithstanding my arm was not yet perfectly recovered, I sensibly gained upon him, and should have overtaken him, had he not extinguished the lamp, involving the narrow passage in total darkness.

I had now every thing to fear, if at that moment I could have been capable of any fear; because, nothing was more easy than for this assassin to wait his opportunity in the dark.

I listened, to mark which way his footsteps tended, still following my sword extended at arms length, and parrying from side to side, that he might not slip me, and cut off my retreat.

I continued to follow till I found myself in a large hall, where the moon-beams faintly shone upon the ponderous furniture, without serving to distinguish particular objects—the window being of stained glass.

I now paused; for I had lost the sound of his footsteps, and I fancied that the villain had sheltered himself in some corner, or behind the furniture, and might dart upon me, without my having power to ward the unseen stroke of death.

This hall was at a considerable distance from my chamber; and now, when the ardor of the chase was over I felt the full danger of my situation: exposed in a place of which I was wholly ignorant, and having near me a man who had the darkest intentions, and scrupled not at the means of executing them. I wondered that he had not used fire arms, which he was probably only prevented from by the apprehension of raising the servants.

I shuddered at retracing the bewildered labyrinth I had just trodden, and it was almost equally dangerous to remain where I was. From this remote situation it was impossible to alarm the people of the castle, and I stood for some time in a gloomy suspense.

At length reflecting, that though the moon at present glimmered through the windows and prevented total darkness, it would in a short time sink from that side of the building, and leave me exposed to dangers I should have no means to repel.

I turned round to seek the passage to my own

chamber, when I fancied I could distinguish the obscure figure of the man stealing along the wall. I started forward, but he eluded my blow, and fled again through an opposite door. I had no doubt but that I should now overtake him; and I continued to pursue till his footsteps were again lost, no longer echoing through the winding passages.

No pale beam of light shone upon the darkness around me, and I turned to retrace my way with caution, every step expecting to meet with the point of his dagger; nothing being more easy than for him to fall upon me by surprise.

I had no means to distinguish whether the way I took was right; and after winding about through several chambers, in place of returning to the great hall, I found myself at the top of a staircase, which, by the faint light of the moon, I did not remember ever to have seen. I made no doubt but I was now on the eastern side of the castle, from whence it would be impossible to return by any of the great galleries, the terminating doors being always locked. I had now bewildered myself so much, that I had lost the clue to those secret ways by which I had entered.

Under these circumstances it became indifferent which way I should proceed, and I descended the stairs. I then found myself upon the ground floor, which, as well as I could distinguish, was paved with marble. The moon had passed to the other side of the horizon, and left this part of the castle in darkness. I went on, and found several doors leading into suits of chambers, all of which were fastened.

About half way along the passage, I found one which stood half open. Without reflecting that it could not possibly lead me to the inhabited part of the castle, I ventured in, but was soon stopped by an opposite door, the key of which was in the lock. I opened it, the hinges grating harshly with the rust they had gathered, and so damp a

vapor issued forth, that I remained some minutes before I durst venture to enter. I then found myself in a small chamber, the walls of which I could reach round with my sword extended. I moved slowly forward, and entered another room, which was much larger, and led into a fourth room, the opposite door of which was locked, and, like the second, the key remained.

I judged by the length of these rooms that I had crossed the base of the eastern wing, and that this door would lead me into the gardens. This circumstance caused me to pause, from a certain reflection which occurred, that the assassin who had entered my chamber, was no other than Jacques; and that through these doors and chambers he had found admission to the castle, locking them after him.

I was pleased with this idea, and resolving to quit this wing of the building, and secure the entrance, I turned the key and opened the door, when I found myself in another room, instead of the garden I had expected; but this disappointment at that time was absorbed in a greater and more terrible feeling.

The moon-beams shone full through the opposite window, reflecting on the objects before me. I fixed my eyes for a moment on the most horrible sight I had ever beheld—a sight which chilled the circling blood in my veins, and overspread my soul with horror.

I recoiled suddenly back, and drew the door firmly too, with an impulse of terror, it closed with a thundering sound, that echoed hollow, and ran along the whole pile of building.

I stood some time in the most cruel agony of suspense; when, reasoning myself into better judgment, I endeavored again to open the door, that I might be certain what I had seen was no deception, and that my mind might not remain with an image upon it of what was most terrible and detestable in human nature.

All my efforts were in vain, the door was firmly fastened, and a loud cry within but too surely convinced me that I had witnessed no illusion.

I returned with an uneven step to the long passage in front of these chambers. The variety of exertion I had undergone rendered me extremely weary, and the horrific object which my eyes had beheld, exhausted my strength so much, that when I had with difficulty ascended half way up the great stairs, I was obliged to sit down, overcome with weakness.

In that situation I resolved to await the return of morning; it being impossible that any one could approach me from above or below, without my hearing the sound of his steps.

I had not sat long before my mind, weary and agitated, sunk into a disturbed and confused sleep. I dreamed, that I was in bed in my own chamber, and that some one pulled me by the arm, so that I awoke, and perceived Virginia smiling upon me. "Follow me, Albert," said she; "my sister has already taken the vows, and I am going to receive the veil—come, and be witness to the ceremony."

I thought I started up, very much afflicted at such a summons, when I beheld on the other side of me a person wrapped wholly in long black clothes, so that I could distinguish neither form nor feature, other than that the outline seemed human. I looked at Virginia as much as to inquire who it could be? She smiled upon me with ineffable sweetness—"Make no inquiries about him," said she; "follow me! and I charge you, as you value your life and my love, that you do not look behind you."

I fancied that I followed as she directed; but by one of those sudden transitions we experience in dreams, I found myself, I knew not how, in a church-yard, Virginia still before me. I felt a strong inclination to look round, that I might see if the same dark form followed us, but her words checked me. "This," said she solemnly, "is my

grave." On a sudden she began to ascend into the air—I found myself rise I knew not how, but it was without exertion on my part.

Virginia's robes, which were of white, now seemed to unfold and spread upon the air for many yards, and I perceived round her waist a zone of sparkling diamonds. The vast vault of the heavens seemed of a deeper blue, the earth diminished, and the stars increased in brilliance and magnitude, appearing as so many suns.

I felt myself ravished at the beauties that surrounded me: "surely," thought I, "that dark being cannot have followed us to this admirable place!" Forgetting the injunction I had received, I inadvertently turned round my head, and beheld with an inexpressible dread which overpowered me, the figure of a skeleton in appearance glowing like a furnace, with black robes streaming in the wind, and waving round him like clouds.

I found myself falling, and caught hold of Virginia's garments to save me; I dragged her down with myself; but, as we fell, I fancied that she was suddenly changed into Almira, and tearing her robes from me, she mounted far from my sight. Loud thunders broke round me on every side—the beaming suns became black as night—while I was precipitating thousands of miles to the earth; where I fainted away, and believed myself dead.

When I recovered from this singular dream, which was not for some time after, I actually believed that what I had experienced was truth. I stretched out my hands with a doubt of my existence; but my whole body was bedewed with a cold sweat, and, opening my eyes, I beheld the day shining around me.

It was some time before I recovered the perfect use of my reason; and then I perceived, that I had in my sleep fallen down the stairs: and I imputed the thunder I heard, to the noise of my falling, as I rolled from step to step.

My strength was so much exhausted that I coul

scarcely stand; and I made no doubt, but I had fainted away in my sleep. I was endeavoring to ascend the stairs, when hearing a noise above me, I looked up and beheld Fernando at the top, whose countenance expressed his wonder and surprise.

He flew towards me, alarmed at my apparent weakness and haggard looks; and, inquiring where I was wounded, began to support me up the stairs.

“My dear friend,” said I, “be not apprehensive on that account, I am not otherwise hurt than by excessive fright and fatigue. I have been witness to the most horrible of actions, and dreamed a dream, that has harrowed up my soul, and reduced me to this weakness.—But how came you to follow me hither?”

“I went,” said he, to your chamber, “to invite you to a morning’s walk in the garden; when I was confounded with finding you not in your own room: and, observing the opening made by the removal of the tournament, I immediately concluded that the intruder of the former night had paid you a visit, and that you had detected him. I saw also that you had not been in bed, which told me you must have been long absent, and I began to fear the worst of accidents.” I did not remain long considering what I should do—a soldier, you know, must be prompt in decision, and the way was open before me—I took down your pistols and with one in each hand entered the passage.

I continued along its obscure and narrow windings, till it opened behind a chair of state, whose drapery and hangings concealed the entrance. I then found myself in a large antique hall, the windows of which were of painted glass. In the middle of the hall stood the large tables and seats in confusion—dishes and goblets covered with dust, remained upon the tables, the visible vestiges of a feast—and I cast a suspicious glance

around me, at remembering the strange interruption on the wedding night of Don Padilla and Lady Zidana.

"I pictured to myself the scene of gay festivity, the exultation of Padilla, and the joy of his guests—which, in one moment, must have been converted into utter dismay; and would have unbent the determination of any other man. I had not much time to bestow on these meditations, as no sound or trace appeared which could point out the way you had taken. A little door at the opposite end standing open invited me to enter; and, after passing through a variety of chambers, where the old furniture remained covered with cobwebs and dust, I, at length, reached the head of these stairs, and am rejoiced that my fears are not altogether realized."

It required almost half an hour to return through the intricate windings, and I found myself too ill, at that time, to enter upon details. We could have but one opinion of the person who had so clandestinely entered my chamber. Nothing was more probable, than that Jacques, who had wounded me in the wood, knew of some secret entrance into that desolate quarter of the castle, where he might find retreat from the search made after him; and prompted by revenge for the death of his comrade, mingled with fear for himself, from what I had overheard, was resolved to destroy me.

We considered whether it would be prudent to mention in the castle what had occurred, and cause that part of the building to be searched; but it struck us that, strangers as we were we had no authority for such proceeding; and it would be needlessly alarming the ladies with dismal apprehensions. We, therefore, judged it better to remain silent, and provide for any attempt that villany or malice might suggest against us.

At first we intended imparting to Gonzalez, the real cause of the interruption he had met in his

narrative; but his years had weakened his firmness; and his fears of Padilla's revenge being ever most strong, we determined to hold him in ignorance, and to watch by ourselves, well armed, on the following night.

CHAPTER VII.

. O now for ever
Farewell the tranquil mind, farewell content.
Shakspeare.

HAVING taken some refreshment, I laid down to tranquilize the ferment of my spirits, and, if possible to forget the terrific object I had seen in the moonlight chamber, as well as the phantoms of my dream which haunted me.

Meanwhile Fernando, after replacing the picture, and fastening it, so as it should not be opened without awaking me, went to make my excuses to the ladies, by informing them, that the letters I had received from Madrid had detained me so far in the night, that I found myself not sufficiently well to rise before noon, when, for the first time, I would join them in the family dining-room.

I arose much refreshed at noon, and joined this agreeable party, but I could not at once shake off the disquiet that preyed upon me. The sight of Virginia seemed even to increase it; as her looks and actions every instant recalled the visions of my slumbers.

The afternoon was passed in little entertainments of music and singing; for, notwithstanding the heat of the weather, we were too much satisfied with our society to separate; and some fragrant fruits, presented us by Gonzalez, greatly refreshed us.

Fernando, to be more at ease, had unloosed his *waistcoat*, and the picture which he always wore attracted the eye of Almira.

"Ah ! ha ! Cavalier," said she, feigning to laugh, "that I suppose is the portrait of some favorite lady?—Will you permit me to see your choice?"

Fernando could not avoid giving the picture into her hands, which she no sooner saw, than she exclaimed—"Holy Virgin ! Senor, how came you to wear the picture of my mother?—Tell me, did you ever see her?"

To these questions Fernando replied—"That he knew not till lately the resemblance, and merely wore it by way of ornament; that he never had had the happiness of seeing the lady her mother; and, that he wondered how she herself should know the likeness, since, to the best of his recollection, she was an infant when her mother died."

"That is very true," replied she, with a sigh. "Though children of different mothers, neither of us ever knew the blessings of maternal affection: indeed, so obscure is the death of these dear relations, that we know little more of them than their pictures inform us. You shall visit our gallery of family paintings, and then you shall compare the likenesses: but I must confess, a miniature softens down the countenance, and makes the face appear handsomer."

"This lady is exquisitely handsome," answered Fernando; "what think you, cousin? (turning to Virginia,) See how admirably the Moorish habit becomes her! In my opinion, were she no relation of mine, the painting merits preservation."

"Come, sister," said Almira, "let us show the Cavaliers the pictures; I know they will be entertained."

"But do you not remember," said Virginia, "that our father has forbid us to go there without him?—When he returns, the Cavaliers can attend him and he can give them the whole history."

"But *would* he give us the history?" cried Fernando, his eyes sparkling with meaning. "Think you that he—"

I interrupted him, by expressing a wish to see these pictures, which I had not done before, and to prevent the ladies from observing any singularity in my friend's meaning. I observed, that perhaps, Don Padilla was choice of them, that he feared they might be injured if visited in his absence.

I saw that Virginia wavered in her own mind—wished to oblige us, and yet fearing to disobey her father: but the arguments of her sister at last overcame her scruples—Gonzalez was sent for to bring the keys.

The old man was not satisfied at the summons, and he ventured to express as much. "You know, my honored ladies," said he, "that his Excellenza would be displeased, were he to come to the knowledge of your having broken his orders; but I am sure the Cavaliers (looking at us) would not wish any words should arise from their curiosity."

"Nonsense!" replied Almira; "do you not know that my father is many miles distant? and how should he ever know that we just went into the room, and out again?"

"Ah, Lady!" replied Gonzalez, "many an action more secret than this, has been published by the winds."

"Do not let us go, sister; we had better not," said Virginia.

"Just as you please, my dear," replied Almira; "Gonzalez talks as if it was a mighty crime; but, for my part, if the Cavaliers will attend me, I will show the pictures myself. Give me the keys Gonzalez: I wonder what harm we shall do to inanimate canvass?"

Fernando and myself made some faint oppo-

tion; though we, in fact, could not conceive that any ill could arise from so innocent a cause.

"Well," said Gonzalez, "if you are determined to go, there are the keys; but you must not insist upon my attendance—I know my duty better."

As he pronounced the last sentence, he looked towards us with an expression of meaning I could not comprehend; and taking the hand of Virginia, she reluctantly accompanied us to the picture gallery.

Almira drew up the curtains, and engaged our attention by a comparison of the two pictures. I admired the resemblance Lady Emira bore to Virginia; and, though my friend gave the preference to Lady Zidana, I could not agree with him—she wanting the clear carnated complexion which I always preferred to a brunette.

We had been about half an hour employed in the gallery, when Gonzalez entered in haste and perturbation.

"Haste instantly away!" cried he. "Return this moment, I beseech you, to the dining-room."

"But why so much hurry?" said I.

"We are undone!" cried he: "the most unforeseen circumstance!—Hasten away this moment!"

We implicitly obeyed him, though ignorant of his reasons; and, locking the door, he hurried down the back stairs, bidding us not tarry till we got to the dining-room.

"What do you think of this interruption?" said I; "what can possibly have thrown the old man into such a tremor?"

"O! I know not," said Virginia; "but I can scarcely breathe with apprehension."

Fernando broke out into a laugh. "Ridiculous, my dear cousin!" said he: "why should you be so apprehensive? This old fellow has a mind to punish us for presuming to differ in opinion from himself: depend on it, you will find the whole a trick of his invention."

"I fear not," answered Virginia, "Gonzalez is not of a light disposition. I never knew him jest in my life."

"Here comes one that does jest," said Fernando. "Here, Hugo! where are you running in such haste?"

"O, Senors!" cried Hugo, out of breath, "such a surprise!--I am all, as one may say, out of sorts. I should as soon have expected to be hanged!"

"That you are very likely to be," said Fernando; "but you would not be in haste to the gallows. Say then where you were running, and what has happened?"

"I only heard it by the way," said he; and ran away directly to tell my fellow servants, who are all at sixes and sevens, and no more expected——"

"Tedious fellow!" cried Fernando; "what is it you are chattering about? what did you hear? what did you expect?"

"Why, I did not expect to meet you in an ill humor, Senor: and what I heard I believe to be true, and that makes me in such haste to repeat it."

"It is to no purpose," said I, "that we trifle with this fellow. Hugo knows you are not his master, and he takes liberties."

"I have no doubt," answered Fernando, "but my first suspicions were true; and this fellow was sent purposely to heighten our apprehension."

I gave credit myself to this suggestion, and we walked leisurely on, till we came to the dining-room. Almira entered first, but she started back with a scream, and all pressed forward to see the object of her dismay. We were struck dumb at sight of Don Padilla who, by our delay, had had time to enter the dining-room before us. He was pacing the room, his brows bent into the severest frown I had ever beheld. You have seen, Marquis, what a gloomy mortal he usually is---but then he looked mischief personified.

Virginia half ran towards him, but he did not

deign to notice her; and her courage failing, she was obliged to lean upon my arm to a chair. Almira was very little better, stammering out something about surprise at his sudden return, which he did not think worthy of answer.

In this unpleasant situation we remained for some minutes. The color went and came alternately in the cheeks of my friend: and, fearing that his feelings might betray him into rashness, I summoned up my resolution, and suppressed my pride at this cavalier treatment.

"Don Padilla," said I, "you are, perhaps, as much surprised at finding unexpected visitants in your castle, as these ladies are at your return without notice, that they might have prepared to receive you in a more suitable manner." Still he remained silent, and I went on. "I can assure you, that this intrusion of ours upon your hospitality, was by no means from a trivial motive; and I should wish——"

"He stopped, and stood opposite me, fixing his keen eye upon me while I continued:

"And I could wish, that the obligation I have received from your family in your absence, may be the means of promoting a more extensive intercourse in future."

"Who are you?" said he, contemptuously.

"Whoever I am," replied I, coolly, "give me leave to say, Don Padilla, *I know who you are!*"

A malicious smile bent his features. "You know who I am!" said he: "be so good as to explain who that is."

I had already condemned myself for my haste; and now replied with a bow:

"The father of these ladies; and, as such, entitled to my esteem, as I shall forever remember the infinite debt of gratitude I owe them."

"So shall I," said he. "But who is your comrade?"

Fernando, who had not the same measures to keep as I, and who had listened with a burning

spirit to the altercation, replied with a high and stern voice:

"Don Padilla! it is for miscreants, murderers and assassins to have *comrades*! You ask who I am?—At present I am a stranger: but you *shall* one day know me! The man who could trample upon the claims of friendship, may well be excused the rights of hospitality!"

"Ha!" cried Padilla, a livid tinge colouring his dark features, "am I betrayed?"

"Your fears betray you," replied Fernando. "Guilt will render ruffians cowards!"

"What do you aim at by such an epithet?" cried he, stamping upon the ground. "Am I betrayed by my own people?—betrayed into the hands of a desperado, an adventurer! Here, help! help!"

At these words he drew, and made a push at Fernando. Virginia fainted away. Almira uttered a loud scream, and caught the left arm of her father, while I ran to separate the combatants, who eyed each other with inveterate fury.

The servants, who had heard their master's cries rushed into the room; but, being unarmed, I held them at bay with the point of my sword, while Padilla, almost choked with madness, commanded them to seize Fernando.

"This is an extreme foolish business on all parts," cried I. "Don Padilla, you must allow this is a shameful outrage upon persons of our quality; and you, Fernando Coello, govern your resentment."

"Is this Fernando Coello?" said Padilla, suddenly.

"Yes," replied I, "it is your nephew, the son of your sister Isabella—Surely you will not treat him thus on his first visit?—Servants you may retire."

Don Padilla did not contradict my order; he sat down in gloomy silence, and my friend sheathing his sword, placed himself in a chair, playing

with the hilt, without noticing the situation of the ladies. Virginia yet remained upon the floor, and her sister hung over her, uttering the most piercing cries.

Agatha, the ladies' attendant, entered with some essence and water, and I flew to assist in recovering Virginia. Don Padilla eyed my attention without speaking; he seemed to revolve in his mind matters of greater moment—now looking at Fernando, and then upon me.

When Virginia recovered, he ordered his daughters to retire; and then, in a tone of greater complacency, inquired my name and quality; and how I had met with the accident in the forest, which he had slightly heard from the servants.

I replied, that I was the Marquis Albert de Denia; that my mother was sister to his first wife, Lady Emira.

The color rose in his face at this remark; but biting his lips, he remained silent.

I had every reason to believe, that the assassin Jacques had held some correspondence with Padilla; in which case, to appear too ignorant, was as dangerous as knowing too much. I, therefore, observed, that having been benighted in the wood, I had clambered a tree to sleep, when I was suddenly awakened by the sound of voices beneath me. "I insist upon it," said one; "he shall not live, (Don Padilla started)—are we to take pay for nothing: I scorn it, Lopez."—"did they say this?" said Padilla, impatiently. I took no notice of this question, but went on.

"I am of your opinion, Jacques," replied the other, who I suppose was called Lopez; "I will not eat my bread in idleness—Don Padilla—he at the mention of his name turned pale, and remained silent)—Don Padilla shall certainly die!" "Here," said Jacques, "shall it be on this spot? Many a man sets out on a journey he never returns from." (Padilla trembled and looked round the room)—"No not here," replied Lopez, "in

the hole further on, where the trees hang over the water. You remember that place Jacques?" Don Padilla started up, and clapped his hand upon his sword, while his eyes flashed with fury—again he sat down, and I continued.

"At these words I lost my patience, and leaping down upon them, sword in hand, one of them was slain; and the other, taking advantage of my fall, stabbed me in the arm. Your daughters saved me from death in the morning; and I now return thanks to you for the protection of your castle."

Padilla muttered a very ungracious welcome. His mind was disturbed by the account I had given him, which involved in suspicion, the designs of the ruffians; a suspicion that was, in some degree, confirmed by their then being in the kingdom, when he supposed them according to their own account, slaves in Turkey.

After a time spent in musing, he suddenly demanded if I had seen, or could recollect the faces of these men? I replied in the negative; the darkness being so great, that I had difficulty to distinguish their persons.

He did not appear displeased with this reply; though he swore vehemently he would have the scoundrel sought for, and hanged upon the nearest tree. "Had you killed them both, Marquis," said he, "you would have made me eternally your friend."

"Thus it is," thought I; "the tools of our vengeance or ambition are terrors to ourselves.—No doubt he trembles for the consequence of that ingratitude, he himself has exemplified."

"I suppose," said he, after a gloomy silence of half an hour, you do not intend remaining in this part of the country many days after you are so well recovered? I understood at Tolosa, the troops were under marching orders."

I perfectly comprehended this hint, and I answered—"the death of my father has a more ur-

gent claim upon my presence at Madrid: and possibly the new dignities I shall thereby receive, will prevent the necessity of my longer leading a life of so much hazard."

"Then you were a soldier of necessity?" replied he, without any regard to delicacy, "You say right, it is a hazardous profession."

I had some difficulty to qualify my reply. "It is as you say," answered I, "but the *necessity* I labored under was the calls of honor, and the claims of my country. These are powerful arguments, Don Padilla."

"Yes," cried Fernando, raising his head from the deep study he had fallen into; but they are not arguments every man can feel."

He darted a look at Padilla, who perfectly understood him, but made no reply; and to turn the discourse, which I feared would again kindle into wrath, I praised the situation of the castle, and the beauty of the scenery. He listened like a man who does not attend.

"You do not seem satisfied with its situation," said Fernando. "For my own part I think I have seen a castle on the banks of the Darro that was much more romantic, more suitable to reflection—You understand me—"

"I do," replied Padilla, rising; but you do not understand me."

He was quitting the room abruptly, when suddenly recollecting himself, he turned to apologise to me; observing that he had many orders to give, and some necessary arrangements to make after his absence.

As soon as we were alone, Fernando gave way to a transport of rage. Insisting that we should, without sleeping again in the castle, return to Tolosa.

"Moderate if you please; this frenzy of yours," said I. "Consider the variety of interests we have to arrange, in the service of which passion will only be detrimental. Don Padilla is a man

of power. He possesses a large revenue from his acquired American fortune ; which is increased by the acquisition of his extensive domain, and rendered immense by the addition of the estates in the province of Grenada. His income is equal to a prince: and think you it will be an easy matter to bring a criminal like him (supposing him such) to justice. We must bury in our breasts every suspicion, till time and opportunity shall bring forward the hour of retribution. Reflect also, that my heart is engaged to Virginia, and you will then remember that Padilla is her father."

"Well, well," replied he, "all this I have been turning in my mind: but remember also, that I am under the most sacred engagements—engagements that I cannot break. Remember also, that this castle contains a secret, which, if told, may overwhelm all the power of Padilla in a moment."

"Do not bring before me that horrid recollection," said I, "The images of that chamber haunt my imagination: and this night I resolve to discover if all my suggestions are true ; or whether the obscurity and terror of the moment had deceived my sight."

"I will attend you," returned Fernando: "this is a business in which we are both deeply engaged; no common affair must turn us to another purpose. Padilla will know that we have slept in different chambers, and it may raise his suspicion if we should vary that custom: mine is not far from yours, and I will be with you a few minutes before twelve."

I had scarcely time to agree to this proposal, when Gonzalez entered the room, under pretence of clearing away the fruit. "I was afraid, Senors," said he, "how it would be ; my heart misgave me when the ladies asked for the key. I could not account for it; but I have strange forebodings, at times."

"Nothing new has happened, I hope," said I

"Yes," replied he, "his Excellenza has found out that you were all in the picture gallery, the curtain being left up. He has been in a terrible passion, and so scolded the young ladies, that they are crying their eyes out, poor souls ! I have come in for my share ; but I am old and tough, used to many a storm that blows over me."

"A savage !" exclaimed Fernando ; "he is--"

"Hush ! Senor, pray do not let any body hear you. I am much mistaken if there be not some spy in the family. You remember the strange voice we heard that night ? If I am betrayed, Senors, I know what will be the consequence."

"Comfort yourself, Gonzalez," said I ; "hear and say nothing to any body, and time may bring about strange events. We must soon leave the castle, possibly to-morrow ; be a guard over the ladies, and if any violence, from whatever motive, should be offered them or you, instantly dispatch a courier to my palace at Madrid, and we will bring a troop of cavalry, and pull his old building down about his ears."

"Gonzalez smiled at this expression ; and, fearing to be missed, hastened away. I was very much pleased that a correspondence had thus been established. It was needless to clear up to him the knowledge we had of the person who had occasioned the interruption, as it would only subject him to a thousand fears, and perhaps cause him to leave the castle.

We saw little more of Don Padilla that night ; he was, or pretended to be, absorbed in business ; neither did the ladies appear, which made us suspect they were under a command to keep their chambers. I retired early to my own, where I prepared every thing for our undertaking ; putting my pistols in order, and providing my lamp. Some arrangements for my intended journey the ensuing day kept me employed ; for I was determined no longer to delay my absence from Madrid, where my presence was so necessary.

The solemn hour of midnight arrived, and Fernando appeared very well armed ; so that we had no occasion to fear an encounter with Jacques, even should he be supported by Don Padilla. We trimmed our lamp, and, to prevent accidents from the sudden closing of a door, or the current of air, Fernando lighted a taper.

I gently drew back the canvass painting, which rolled into a niche, and, entering the opening, closed it behind us. We proceeded silently and cautiously, till we arrived at the gothic hall, where the unfinished feast remained.

I was about to draw the curtains behind the chair of state, when I fancied that I heard the hollow sounds of a passing footstep. We paused for a few moments, and all again became silent.

I feared that our lights must betray us : for though we did not apprehend much personal danger, we knew not how to excuse to Don Padilla the unwarrantable freedom we were taking, and which in our own eyes, appeared wanting of honor. The motive, however, was strange, and out of the ordinary occurrences of life: common means of proceeding were abortive resources; and the necessity laid upon us became, in our eyes, sufficient excuse.

I drew the curtain with caution, and looking round, all appeared dark and vacant. We ventured forward treading light as midnight robbers, the echoing hall catching and returning the smallest sound.

Our lights reflected our persons in lengthened shadows on the wall : and that fear superstition inspires, irresistably touched our minds, as we recollected the several incidents, that had occurred to ourselves.

We descended the staircase, down which I had fallen, and passed on till we came to the door of those chambers where I had been so shocked with human depravity. The key was no longer in the lock : a plain indication that some person had

been there since myself; and an assurance that my senses had not wholly deceived me. We endeavored to enter by force: but the strong door resisted all the efforts we were capable of making, without endangering ourselves by the noise. We paused to consider whether we should return to find other means of entrance.

A faint ray of light darted across the farther end of the passage, discovering to us a distant and narrow flight of stairs, leading to a range of apartments, of which we had no knowledge.

"This flaring light will betray us," said I. "If you will remain here with the lamp and taper I will venture to ascend those stairs, and see whence that light shines."

Fernando would not readily agree to this proposal; he wished us to leave our lights burning upon the pavement, while we should go together. But I represented the danger of our making too much noise; and the double service he would perform in coming to my assistance by surprise, if assistance should be necessary, as my assailants would not be prepared for his attack.

Having prevailed on him to agree to my proposal, I walked cautiously forward, ascending the back stairs. The light shone steady on the landing, then suddenly disappeared, as if the door of the chamber, from whence it shone, had been closed. I ventured forward, listening at every step I took. About twenty paces forward my ear caught the low sound of voices, but so indistinct, that I could make out no one sentence.

I paused, and in a few moments, a door on the right hand was partly opened, a stream of light shone full in the gallery, and some person looked out, as if to see no intruder was near. He retired without closing the door, and I advanced, scarce daring to breathe. I ventured so near that I could distinguish the voice of Padilla, and the harsh tones of some other, who spoke so low, I had difficulty to understand him.

"All this that you tell me is true?" said Padilla.

"True your Excellenza."

"And you heard that old dotard amusing them with all the lies that are circulated by the superstitious fools about him?"

"Yes, your Excellenza. He mentioned the strange entrance of Count Ferendez, on your wedding night; upon which they made their comments. I am certain the Marquis overheard more than was sufficient when he was roosting in that tree."

"And for which your tongues deserve to be cut out," said Padilla; "we must consult about him; he must pay for his curiosity!" "Aye, aye, by the Holy Peter!" said the ruffian, whom I had no doubt was Jacques; "If I take him in hand, he will have tight work of it; 'tis what I owe him for the murder of my friend. He was very curious in his inquiries about the ladies."

"Do you say so?" cried Padilla. "Do you think he has any suspicions?"

"'Tis as certain as death," replied Jacques; "he has more than suspicion: I would have done his business that night, had I found him snug."

I shuddered at the narrow escape I had had; and not without a sense of the danger I ran, from having raised upon me so inveterate an enemy. He went on:

"Invite them to remain with you some days. They will not enter into your motive. There are many ways to dispose of a guest!"

"By my troth are there!" said Padilla, in a raised voice, "you have hit it, Jacques: these sparks are not to be played with. Fernando is a fiery-headed fellow, and has a claim from his ancestors, never yet settled, to these very estates."

"I know it," replied Jacques; "I have thought on that. We will settle his claim, however, with more certainty than law."

Don Padilla, broke into a laugh. It was the

laugh of malignant triumph: and had I at that moment possessed the power, it is probable I should have made no scruple of arresting their intentions.

"Let us now go," said Padilla; "have you the key? We must perform the necessary duty."

I inquired within myself what this duty could be. Had it relation to the things I had seen in the moonlight chamber; or, were there yet deeper or more horrible secrets in the gloomy walls of this antique building. "Why not be a witness to this duty?" thought I. "If it relates to that chamber they must pass these stairs—I shall have time to reach Fernando, and we will take our stations together."

I retreated gently down the stairs, and passing quickly along the passage, was surprised to find Fernando absent. The lamp remained burning on the pavement, but the taper was gone. "Surely," said I to myself, "this is very imprudent—what succor could he have given me in case of necessity?—But what motive could have led him from his post? it must have been momentous. He did not pass me, I am certain; and surely cannot be returned to my chamber."

I waited with the greatest impatience and apprehension, expecting that Padilla and Jacques would every moment appear upon the opposite stairs, and find me exposed before them, in a place where their crime would run no danger of detection. I durst not venture to call, and my imagination began to picture some unexpected tragedy.

The old bell of the castle sounded the solemn hour of one. Its vibrations seemed lengthened in my ear; where it had not ceased trembling, when a bright light darted from a door on the left hand at a distance, and gave me to expect the return of Fernando.

I advanced a few paces to meet him, wondering what could have induced him to enter that passage in my absence; but my wonder was changed

into astonishment on beholding a phenomena singular and unaccountable. The light, whose rays had broke upon the long and obscure passage, moved forward without visible conductor, in the form of an ignis-fatuus, or marshy meteor; it moved within a foot of the pavement, with a slow and even motion, and its light was fixed and clear, without wavering on the breath of the wind.

I stood at a distance, watching this ominous appearance and expecting what might ensue, nor did I many moments expect in vain.

A tall figure, wrapped in a long cloak, and muffled round the head, walked solemnly into the passage. The arms were crossed upon his breast, and but a faint outline beneath the drapery, marked its connection with the human form.

I shuddered as this phantom drew near; as it perfectly brought to my mind the black figure I had beheld in my dream, within a few yards of the very spot where I then stood. Its size was equal to that of Padilla, and I should have supposed it himself in disguise, had it not been for the supernatural flame which moved forward before. I wanted courage to speak or to move, waiting with terror for the event.

He moved forward, in a moving posture, until he came within a few yards of where I stood, then solemnly raising the hood of the cloak which enveloped his head, and throwing wide his right arm I beheld beneath, the dress of a soldier stained with blood.

I started at the sight. I doubted not but I saw before me the perturbed spirit of Count Ferendez, and my knees trembled beneath me. His countenance was pale and bloodless—his eyes were wild yet without lustre—and death seemed stamped upon his yellow forehead. His lips were without motion; and, as he slowly passed me, he pointed to the door from which I had seen him enter.

Once, and but once, I had seen this dreadful vision of disturbed immortality, on the eventful night

which had announced the death of my father. The indistinct view that I then had, imprinted for ever, on my memory the terror of features not to be forgotten : and it was not until the phantom had ascended the great stairs, that I found courage to remove from the place where I stood.

I could not doubt but the motion it had made to the farther door, concerned my friend ; whom I now judged to have seen the same appearance in my absence, and followed it into some danger. I had reason to believe, from what I had seen in the moon-light chamber, that Don Padilla and Jacques were not the only inhabitants of this dreary wing : and I shuddered with apprehension, as I hastened to find my friend.

The door which I entered opened into a winding passage, which was arched, with masonry, very different from any part of the castle I had hitherto seen. I began to fear, from its solidity, that it led into the dungeons and vaults which ran beneath the whole building.

My apprehensions were in part allayed, when I entered, by three descending steps and a narrow door, which, from the rust of its fastenings, seemed to have been closed for many years, into a chapel, evidently long in disuse.

I waved my lamp in the air, to guide me through the deep gloom which seemed impenetrable : a cold and sacred stilness seemed to reside in the place, and to fasten on my mind with a reverential awe.

Tall shadows seemed to move along the walls, as my lamp waved in the air. I called in a low voice, the name of Fernando ; but no sound, except faint echoes returned reply.

I began to be extremely alarmed on his account ; not being able to conjecture what misfortune could have befallen him.

I paused, and looked round me with a reverence I cannot describe, and which we seldom feel. The ornaments of carved work were covered with dust and cobwebs. The crucifix and the lamps were

broken. Trophies of ancient military exploits, waved their torn fragments in the air. I approached the altar, on which a small crucifix yet remained, mildewed with damp. I lowered my lamp to look at the workmanship of the altar, and perceived on one side, an iron door, which opened into the wall, standing open, and I had no doubt led into the family sepulchre.

“Doubtless,” thought I, “my dear Fernando has followed that terrible phantom into this place, and his fright has overcome him, surrounded by so many fearful objects.

I confess I did not feel any satisfaction in the thought of descending into this dark and frightful abyss, but the claims of friendship suppressed this repugnance; and holding my lamp so as it was least liable to be extinguished, I ventured down the steps, which were loose and shook beneath my weight. The lamp which I held in my hand scarce served to render darkness visible; and I saw, with fear, that the flame became every moment dimmer, till it twinkled like a star and expired, leaving me in the profoundest darkness.

I called aloud on Fernando, but received no answer: the hollow vaults extending, and reverberating my voice to a distance, which left me to conjecture.

I stretched out my hands, and found them resisted on one side by a pile of coffins, which shook at the touch. I shuddered as if I had grasped a serpent, and turned round with intention to hasten from a place where the air was so damp, I had scarce power to respire, and where heaps of dead were extended in terrible array.

In my haste I stumbled against something on the floor, and fell down. I reached out my hand, after the first surprise, and felt an human body on the ground before me. The blood ran cold to my heart. My fingers traced over the face, it seemed warm beneath the touch, and truth flashed upon my comprehension.

"It is Fernando," cried I, aloud, and scarce knowing what I said; "he is dying, and no help is near!" the pang which I felt at that moment, I cannot attempt to describe—it was a sort of despair; and, forgetting danger to myself, I dragged the body up the steps, which were clammy with subterranean dews, and happily gained the chapel.

I tore open his clothes, and putting my hand upon his heart, a slight pulsation was perceptible. I raised the body on my shoulders, and being too much agitated to regard trifling incidents, I ran through the apartments, notwithstanding the impenetrable darkness. The air in the great hall was strong, and, placing him upon one of the chairs, I chafed his temples and breast, till he began to breathe freely, and by slow degrees, recovered. His recollection, however, was extremely confused; and he cried frequently, "O! the horrid vision! take me away, my dear Albert!—Save me!—Save me!"

I was myself almost distracted at his raving; not doubting but his senses were disturbed by what he had seen, and I conducted him with the utmost difficulty back to my chamber: where I forced him to drink one of the cordials the physician had prescribed to me, and then laying him upon the bed, I sat by him, thinking over the many unaccountable incidents which had occurred to us both within so very few months.

It appeared to me like a dream. "Who else amongst mankind," thought I, "are involved in so singular an adventure?—In a business so complicated, so mysterious, and so dreadful, that I am at times tempted to doubt my own existence; or to believe all the dreams of idleness and romantic superstition.

Undoubtedly murder is the most atrocious offence man can commit against man; for which neither he, nor all united society can make retribution to the injured. It is treason against the or-

der and harmony of nature. Without the intervention of supernatural witness, no crime has been discovered by ways so unforeseen and so singular.

It was the belief of the ancients, that the wandering spirits of persons slain by violence, whether private or in battle, roamed round the earth until their ashes were buried; and that belief has descended, and remains to this day amongst the lower classes of mankind. And why may it not be so? Are we more wise than the ancients? or, are we more daring?"

CHAPTER VIII.

Credulity, the child of Ignorance,
Nurtur'd by Idleness, best loves to dwell
In rustic shades, or in the gloomy pile.

WHILE I sat beside my friend, wrapped in these gloomy musings, the morning dawned across the mountains, light and airy clouds spread over the horizon; here streaked with gold, and there dappled with silver. In the east, the ethereal blue of the heavens enlivened the landscape, and the dark mountains of Morena seemed for once, to smile.

I arose from watching over my friend, who had fallen into a gentle slumber, and, opening the casement, inhaled the fresh air of the morning, which revived my spirits, and seemed to breathe upon me in new life.

The beauty of the garden beneath me, gay with a profusion of variegated flowers, invited me to partake of its sweets, before the blazing sun should have exhaled them, or withered the clear green of the foliage.

No person was yet visible in this large pile of

building, and fastening the sliding picture with a knife, I stole softly along the galleries, and descended towards the garden. The door of a little room on the ground floor stood open, and some person within sighed heavily.

"Who," thought I, "can have occasion to indulge this early grief? Have those in humble stations troubles like us to prey upon them, and blight their little felicities? Very possible this is some love-stricken maiden indulging the reveries of future prospects, and sighing forth the name of some fortunate youth."

These passing reflections occasioned my return after going by a few paces, and curiosity prompted me to enter. I was greatly surprised to see Virginia already up and sitting alone, so lost in the subject of her reflections, that I made several steps before she turned her eyes to see me.

She started, blushing at my intrusion, and, in her confusion, was at a loss to speak.

"My dear cousin," said I, faltering, for I had caught her diffidence; how fortunate is this! it is a chance beyond my hopes. This day, Virginia, will most probably part us many leagues, and when shall I see you again?"

"That I do not know," replied she, turning her eyes towards the ground."

"But why should you ever wish to see me more?"

"Can you ask me so cold, so cruel a question?" said I, taking her hand. "Can you be ignorant, that while you administered to my illness, you inspired a pain that is incurable, but by yourself. Tell me, then, dearest Virginia, whether I may hope you can return my affection?"

She blushed, hesitated, half raised her eyes beaming with meaning, then answered with the prettiest confusion in the world—"I know not, Marquis, whether discretion justifies me—I am ignorant of the ways of the world, and have only to speak with the sincerity of a country maid. I

have heard, that, in polished circles, they never mean what they say."

"But I, Virginia, I have been little used to those circles ; the camp has been my school, and the thunder of war my rattle. We have no time, in camps, to study the art of trifling with the affections of the fair ; and, believe me, lady, you yourself cannot speak with less disguise. Speak, then, Virginia ; let me listen with delight to the accents of peace."

I endeavored to soothe her embarrassment. I pressed her to declare that she was not indifferent ; and an affirmative, which died away upon her trembling lips, elevated my feelings to rapture.

After allowing a few short minutes to these endearing confessions, which constitute so much of the pleasure of genuine love, and evaporate in detail, I remembered with regret the necessity there was for my sudden departure from the castle, and adverting to the return of Don Padilla, "is it not surprising," said I, "that he should treat with such *hautieure* persons who have some claims to civility? Can you guess any motive, Virginia for this strange disposition? is it a malady of the mind or arises it from external causes."

"I," replied she, "cannot give any reason for it. There was a time, I am told, when he was all vivacity, too much so, indeed ; but that was before he went to Peru. His good fortune made him more exalted in his carriage: but from the death of my mother (which happened before I can remember) arose that severity of manners, which glooms over his own enjoyments. He is always, I think, worse after his visits to Grenada ; and my sister and I have generally to seclude ourselves from his presence for some days, till his temper becomes more settled."

"And does no suspicion ever cross your mind?"

"Holy Virgin ! what suspicion should?"

"Nay, I know not ; but surely there must be

some secret, some unusual cause for this behaviour. Who, or what does he visit at Grenada? Have you relations there?"

"You ask very strange questions," said Virginia.

"Because," replied I, "I have strange suspicions. Your mother died suddenly---Do not start, Virginia, but hear me. Her waiting-maid Teresa, has never been heard of since the night of the funeral--"

Here I suddenly remembered the images of that horrible chamber, and of what my eyes had witnessed, and I started up involuntarily. A moment was sufficient for recollection; I sat down and continued.

"The Lady Zidana, what became of her? How, or when did she die?"

"Did you never hear?" said Virginia, turning very pale, perhaps, at the disorder of my features. "I remember old Gonzalez told us one day she was drowned in a boat upon the river Darro, by the boatman being in liquor. But what has all of this to do with your sudden departure?"

"Would to heaven," cried I, "that it had not to do! Ah! Virginia, I fear--"

"Fear what?" said she, trembling. "You terrify me with apprehension; what is it you fear?"

"I fear that all is not right. Why is the eastern wing of the castle never visited?"

"O," said she, smiling, "if that is the reason of your suspicions, I can easily do them away. That side of the castle is haunted. Have you not noticed that large painting of the black and the white knights? Did you understand it?"

"Yes," replied I, "I *did* understand it; it has a very important meaning. Are you then acquainted with the secret?"

"I know no particular secret in it," returned she. "It is well known that wing of the castle is haunted by these knights. They were two brothers, who, in former times, fell in love with the

lady of the castle, who was their only sister. She lived alone with them after the death of their parents; her name was Seraphino, and she was renowned as the greatest beauty in the provinces. Every knight who sought her hand, was obliged to tilt with one or other of the brothers, who constantly remained victorious; and their uncourteous behaviour drove all visitants from the castle.

“The brothers having no strange knights to dispute with, became jealous of each other, both endeavoring to influence Seraphino with their criminal passion; and, being of fiery spirits, they agreed to bring their pretensions to issue by single combat. They mounted their horses in the court yard, obliging their sister to witness this unnatural dispute. The white knight was wounded; but he unhorsed the black one. Both were enraged to a pitch of frenzy; and dragging their sister into the great gothic hall in the eastern wing, they were proceeding to finish the combat by the sword. Seraphino endeavored to part them, but in vain. They fought with the fury of lions; they were not content, till they had received so many wounds, that they fell upon the floor in the agonies of death. Seraphino was overwhelmed with grief and despair at the sight; and, stabbing herself with a poniard, fell, and died upon the bodies of her brothers.

“Ever since that time the east wing has been haunted. The noise of the knights fighting is heard at particular times: and upon the same night on which the event first took place, the spirits of the knights and the lady act over the same tragedy: the marks of which are visible at this day, the form of their bodies where they fell, being printed on the floor in blood.

“This is the most tragical of tragedies, Virginia,” said I. “Who gave you all this wonderful information? Have you seen or heard any part of it yourself?”

“I have certainly heard very strange noises,”

she replied. "I have heard groans, at times, which sunk my heart within me. But why should you doubt the truth of this story?"

"Because, my dear cousin," said I, "there are many circumstances very improbable in it. It is not more than twenty years since that side of the building was deserted. Your mother, Emira, resided there, and if it had been subject to these martial visitants, I fancy she would soon have changed her situation."

Virginia had attended these objections with impatience. "Nothing is more easily answered," said she, with an air of superior argument. My father, when he came to live at this place, on his return from Peru, found the castle shut up : and, treating the whole story as a jest, he had that very suit of rooms fitted up for his own residence, the better to inspire the servants with courage. He was, however, never very content in his situation : and the servants have told me, they were certain, from his change of disposition, he had seen the unnatural brothers in their nocturnal rencounter.

"He still persisted in living there, when my mother died. Who knows if she was not frightened to death? I'm sure the sight of three dead people cutting each other in pieces would kill me. When I first saw you wounded in the wood, and the dead robber beside you, I thought of the two knights."

"Nothing could be more natural," replied I. "But 'tis very strange none of the servants should ever meet these Cavaliers : and how should your father suddenly abandon that side of the castle? If he could live in harmony with them three or four years, how came they to fall out at length!"

"You laugh, Marquis, but I assure you it is a very serious affair. On the wedding night of my father with Lady Zidana, he had this hall cleared and illuminated in the most splendid manner. All the guests were seated, and the revelry begun, when the knight in black, wrapped in a long

cloak, the color of his armor, entered the hall. The clock struck one—and all the frightened guests started up in terror, flying away in the greatest confusion. When all the visitors had made their escape different ways, and none but Lady Zidana, fainting on the floor, and Don Padilla remained, he took courage to inquire the reason of this unexpected visit; inviting the ghost, at the same time, to sit down to the feast.

“The black knight frowned at this familiar invitation: and, opening his long cloak, shewing his armor broken, and his body covered with wounds. “Fly,” cried he, in a voice like the crashing of spears: “this hall is mine!—My brother will be here anon, to partake with our sister in the feast. This east wing of the castle is ours: and whoever henceforth resides in it, must enter the combat with us.” So saying, he threw his gauntlet on the ground, and looking sternly at my father, pointed with one hand to the challenge, and the other to the door. My father willingly left such a guest in possession of the feast, which, I am told, remains on the table to this very day: and, taking his new-married bride in his arms, hurried away from the gothic hall.”

I could not but admire the mixture of truth and falsehood, and the plausible turn Padilla had given to an interruption, witnessed by so numerous an assembly that to have denied the fact, would be to have pronounced himself guilty.

Credulity is ever ready to believe without criticism: and no tale can be too improbable for ignorant auditors. I had been warned by Gonzalez of the ridiculous reports circulated by the servants, which he had not taken the trouble to contradict: and I was grieved to see that Virginia had paid them so much attention. Nothing, indeed, could be more natural in their secluded situation, where a tale of the marvellous had charms unknown in the busy scenes of life: and where superstition held its sway without control.

"Virginia," said I, at the conclusion of her story; "I have some reasons to wish you not to place too much confidence in the strange reports of domestics. They are generally unacquainted with facts; and from vague information, or half-heard sentences, conjure up a story that will set reason at defiance. Let us now, if you please, leave the knights to their tilting in the hall, for matters of infinitely more importance. Will it be possible that I should correspond with you, send you my plans, my adventures, and actions? Do you know of no way by which we may exchange our ideas and sentiments?"

"No," replied she, "you would not wish me to enter into any clandestine correspondence. My honor would suffer in my own eyes; and you would esteem me less."

"Not so my angel," cried I; there are cases and situations in which it is allowable to set aside those strong claims of parental duty. When, for instance, a father would control the establishment of his daughter, merely from whim, pleasure, or convenience—when he has not one rational argument to oppose—when he does not condescend to inquire into the merits and claims of the candidate. Nothing can be more unjust and unreasonable."

"I have listened to you with regret," answered she, "because I would not willingly alter my opinion of you. But what shall I think, if you thus early wish to lead me into opposition? Indeed I cannot, will not. It is time enough for me to do thus, when he shall have proceeded to these acts of tyranny you enumerate."

"Must I then depart, my Virginia," said I, "must I quit you without a certain prospect of hope? will you sacrifice all my happiness to the will of your father?"

"How you talk, Marquis," said she, with an air of vexation: "have I said any of this? or is the situation we at this time stand in, such as you

are picturing? My father; I acknowledge, is melancholy to extreme; but time, and your merit——”

Here she paused suddenly, recollecting that she was, perhaps, saying more than her situation permitted; and, blushing remained silent.

I could not but admire the sensibility of her soul, and the rectitude of her mind, unpolished by the sophisms of the world: and though I should have rejoiced at some means of corresponding, she yet rose in my esteem by the refusal.

I endeavored to convince her of the ardor of my passion, by saying all that my situation could suggest. I refrained wounding her with the terrible subject of our suspicions. On that point I found my heart torn by the most conflicting passions. I knew that Fernando was resolved upon justice; but it now became impossible I should follow his designs. The world, on cool judgment would think me a monster: and calumny would not fail to suggest, that, to obtain the daughter, I had hunted down the father as an obstacle to my desire. I lost myself in a reverie of maddening reflections, till an observation of Virginia's recalled my recollection; and, ashamed of having betrayed so much absence of mind, I took a tender farewell, exchanging a mutual promise of fidelity and love.

I returned to my chamber in a pensive mood, which I indulged till Fernando awoke. His fancy was tranquilized, and his senses clear.

He inquired if I had given orders for our departure; and he was positively resolved not to remain another night in the castle.

While he adjusted his dress, I went down to give my servants orders to hasten to Tolosa, there to procure mules for my journey over the mountains: Fernando being to accompany me the first day's stage, his engagements with the army not allowing a longer absence.

Padilla did not arise till late. He then request

ed our attendance in the breakfast room, where he put on as much condescension as his temper would allow. He made some slight excuse for his first reception; and, as a compensation, requested us to remain with him a week or two longer: professing his desire of some companions to enliven the solitude of his situation.

"We go hence in the afternoon," said Fernando abruptly.

Don Padilla's countenance indicated his disappointment; and he strove in vain to unbend the frown which accompanied it. I must confess, when I recollected the black design of the invitation, I was nearly forgetting that Virginia was his daughter.

"It would be to little purpose," said I, with a look which I intended should speak to his soul; "for us to remain longer in the castle, we cannot sleep at night."

"Whose is that fault?" said he, "the innocent can sleep!"

"And can you sleep?" replied I.

He was evidently rising into anger, yet fearing to betray himself; and condemning my own folly, I endeavored to turn off a discussion equally imprudent and dangerous. I pretended to have received dispatches, by way of Tolosa, which declared my presence in Madrid could no longer be dispensed with: and that knowing our company would be willingly spared, I had not an hour before sent my servant for mules.

"Do you go immediately to Madrid?" said Padilla; "or do you return to Tolosa?"

I replied, that I should proceed immediately over the mountains and that my friend would attend me one day's journey.

He made some slight observations on the danger of these mountains, from the banditti which infested them. "But I suppose," said he, "you are well armed, and your servants are not without courage?"

"As to that," answered I, "I have very little fear. These banditti are only the deserters of rebels; they are cruel, but they are cowards: and though I have only one servant, armed with a sabre and *arquabuz*—with a sword and pistols for myself, I am not apprehensive of danger. Raolo has stood by me in many a desperate encounter; and will not turn his back to any man in the passes and defiles of Sierra Morena."

"May be so," said Don Padilla dryly. "I am glad you have so trusty a companion. There have been people murdered in these recesses before this time, Marquis; I only speak to caution you."

"Aye, aye," said Fernando, "people have been murdered in other places besides the mountains of Sierra Morena—Have they not Marquis?"

Don Padilla evidently started and looked round; but to cover either his anger or sudden agitation, he replied with a laugh—"your friend, Marquis, has a mind to be witty upon you for your exploit in the wood."

"Do you call that murder, Senor?" cried Fernando. "I should have thought *you* could have told the difference."

"And why I?" cried Padilla, trembling with rising fury, "Can nobody but me tell the difference?"

"Yes," replied Fernando, "every body but you."

"Come, come," said I coolly, "this is the most idle discourse imaginable; and shows the absurd turn conversation will sometimes take. I hope, Don Padilla, we shall be permitted to bid adieu to the ladies?"

"I doubt it," returned he, with his wonted haughtiness. "The ladies are employed."

"But surely, they can forego that employ for a few moments, to take leave of their cousins. Especially when we may never meet again."

"That observation is just," said Padilla: "you *may* never meet again."

"As such may, indeed, be the case," said I, gravely, "you will not surely deny me the satisfaction of returning my thanks to my cousins for the kindness I have received in particular."

"I will deliver them myself," replied he. "There is no occasion for these formalities, they only make parting more unpleasant.—I detest leave taking."

"Except when it quits you of troublesome guests," said Fernando: "and then, Senor, it is the pleasantest action in life."

"I confess then," replied Padilla, peevishly, "I shall this day experience a very great pleasure."

"You are fairly beaten, my friend," said I; "you must not pretend to catch his Excellenza. But now let us be serious. If you ever come to Madrid, Don Padilla, you will find at my palace a cordial reception: and I hope it will not be long before I have the pleasure of receiving you there, that I may return in part the obligation."

"Nothing is certain," answered he, gloomily. "Life hangs upon uneven threads, Marquis. You are a young man; but many a man dies about your age—especially if he is in the army."

I observed, that while he made this superfluous remark, his eyes moved from one to the other, with a malignity and sneer upon his countenance that rekindled all my suspicions, and flushed my face with resentment. I could not forbear, in my own mind, marking him for a villain; and I rejoiced that he was fortunately and timely frustrated in his plans, by the discovery we had made.

After this long and unpleasant conversation we separated. I endeavored without success, to procure admission to the ladies: and it was with difficulty I found an opportunity of speaking six words to Gonzalez, to assure him of my protection; and to exact his promise, that he would watch over my interest, and in case of any particular incident arising that might affect the happi-

ness of either of the ladies, that he would dispatch a courier to me, at any expense.

I passed the time till noon in unpleasant reflection; Fernando relating to me the supernatural incidents of the preceding night. He having followed (as I suspected) the phantom, on its beckoning him as it passed.

"It was very unwillingly that I entered the chapel," said he; "and nothing but a sense of my own promise to obey, could have induced me to descend into that horrible tomb. The spectre moved amidst the piles of coffins, and seemed to intend leading me into the labyrinth of vaults, which branched under the castle. When turning my eye a little towards the left, I perceived a light rise out of the earth, and a female dressed in a strange habit, gradually rose as from an opening grave."

"A female," cried I, interrupting him, "that is most strange! Who, or what can she be? For what purpose is she there?—Does she dwell in those dungeons?"

"I know not," replied Fernando; "such she appeared to my eyes; and her disordered countenance and dress reminded me of the furies. She gave a loud scream at my appearance. A scream which rung through those dreary vaults, and dismayed my inmost soul. She sunk again into the grave, and left me in total darkness:—the spirit of Count Ferendez having continued its way in silence.

"I had lost my taper in the emotion of my mind; and was so much overcome with the damp air, and the shock my spirits had received that I sunk upon the ground."

Our comments upon this relation were extremely unpleasant. In the midst of them we were interrupted by the return of my servant with the mules, and three guides, who were to accompany us.

Don Padilla attended upon us himself, probably to prevent the possibility of our speaking to

his daughters. He remarked the number of my guides, and seemed curious to know how we were all equipped.

I looked up in vain to the windows of the building, for a last glance from my Virginia, but she was not visible, and, after receiving the sarcastic wishes of Don Padilla for our prosperity and safety, we set out from the castle of Montillo, where so many eventful incidents had happened, that our lives actions, and pursuits, might be dated from the events that carried us hither.

CHAPTER IX.

The winds are up, the lofty elmen swangs,
Again the lightning and the thunder pours
And the full clouds are braste attenes in stonen
showers. *Chatterton.*

OUR way lay through the wood, whose deep boughs soon hid us from the sight of the castle. Our curiosity induced us to dismount, and giving the guides charge to wait for us at the bend of the road, we took the path along the bank of the river. We examined every gloomy hollow in a cursory manner; being more particular when we arrived at the spot where the spirit of Count Ferendez had first conducted me.

It was a place of peculiar secrecy; being concealed and overhung with interwoven cork trees, which bent their branches to the river, that ran beneath the hanging brow, deep and without apparent current.

Our time did not admit much to curiosity, and we proceeded onwards to the place where Lopez had been buried. Fernando, who had attended on that occasion, perceived at once that the earth

been removed ; and I remembered the incident which had alarmed me, and which I then judged rightly, had been Jacques carrying away the body of his friend, to destroy the proofs it might at any time have furnished.

We found our mules in waiting at an opening of the forest, and we entered upon a country which every league became more barren. We advanced up the mountains, leaving behind us the silver stream of the Guadalquivir, which the eye might trace to an infinite distance ; now wandering amongst sun-browned fields where not a blade of grass appeared : then gliding amongst pleasant valleys, where verdure spread in all the freshness of beauty, and smiling villages intermingled with plantations of olives.

The majestic castle of Montillo was no longer visible, but as a black spot in the forest ; and we soon lost sight of it wholly.

Our guides and my servant Raolo hung behind, that we might converse with freedom ; and we settled on a plan of future correspondence.

The country became so wild and dreary, that I would have persuaded Fernando to return ; he having no one to attend him but his own servant : a guard by no means sufficient to the dangers of the road.

At nightfall we reached a few scattered huts, where it was difficult to find entertainment. The inhabitants consisted chiefly of gipsies and shepherds, who attend the flocks on the mountains, and lead a life of rude and pastoral employ.

What little they possessed they were willing to share ; and our mules and ourselves were accommodated in one large room, not very remarkable for sweetness. 'Tis well for us soldiers that we are not very difficult to please ; or in travelling we should often be unpleasantly situated, in places where money will scarcely procure the necessaries of life.

We arose very early in the morning, that we might have leisure to rest at noon, the heat of the preceding day having so incommoded me, that I found some pain in my wounded arm.

I took leave of Fernando with many melancholy reflections; which so dejected my spirits, that I was ashamed of my own feelings. I fancied that we should never meet again; and pulling my hat over my eyes, I gave my mules the reins, riding slowly forward, absorbed in thought.

The beauty of the morning had few charms for my prejudiced eye, which was perpetually bringing before me the garden of the castle, with Virginia and Almira: and when I looked for some particular object, I felt disappointed at beholding nothing round me, but rising cliffs and barren mountains, spreading and extending to the clouds in chaotic confusion; with here and there a stumpy tree, or gloomy cork, to mark the scenery.

How different this from the fertile regions of Grenada, where a new Paradise seemed breathing into life. There every plant, every fruit, and every flower that could charm the senses, please the taste, or gratify the eye, bloomed with the profusion of prolific nature. Cooling streams wandered amidst the flowery meadows; the husbandman's song mingled with the chanting of birds: and animated creation enjoyed its being.

But how sad was the reverse of the prospect before me! Mountains piled upon mountains; roads, the terror of the traveller from the accumulated dangers of impending cliffs and yawning gulfs, with all the terrors of cruel banditti. The face of nature arid and sterile: no fruits, no flowers, no plants appeared, except a few stumpy thorns, sickly olives, and mountain thyme. No cooling streams, margined with violets, gladdened the senses; but a silent and dreary prospect filled the soul with images of the horrible and the sublime.

At noon we sat down beneath the shelter of some broken rocks, which were scattered in a confused

heap, characteristic of the wilderness around us. It was a situation picturesque in extreme : and wanted only a company of banditti dividing their spoil, or waiting to fall upon the traveller, in place of muleteers eating garlic and cheese, to become worthy the pencil of a master.

After our repast, we emptied two bottles of Malaga wine; which elevated the spirits of my companions so much, that I wished, in my own mind, for that content and joy, written upon the broad grin of their countenances. Every thing to them was a subject of jest:—the black mountains, the sterile summits of the spire-like cliffs, received ridiculous names, as fancy or wit drew a comparison.

The clear air seemed to expand the spirits. One of them sang a little ballad I had before seen in Murcia, while my servant, and the others danced, and, joining in the chorus, made the hanging rocks resound.

Ye maidens fair of feature,
Than dews of morning sweeter,
Attend my song,
Nor think it long,
That pinion's time flies fleeter,
While on your cheeks reposes,
The bloom of fragrant roses,
Your dimpling smiles,
All hearts beguiles,
And tender love discloses.
Then sing with me, ye happy maids,
Cooling fountains, pleasing shades;
Where love and youth, forever gay,
Sport the fleeting hours away.

Come here, ye maidens witty;
Forsake the town and city;

A rustic life,
 Devoid of strife,
 Becomes the young and pretty.
 Here all is mirth and pleasure,
 Health is the peasant's treasure;
 The nymphs invite,
 And sweet delight,
 The happy moment's measure.
 Then sing with me, ye happy maids,
 Cooling fountains, pleasing shades;
 Where love and youth for ever gay,
 Sport the fleeting hours away.

Notwithstanding my present disposition to sadness, I could not but be entertained with the gaiety of the little group; who brought back to their fancy the pleasures of their native fields, and forgot the fatigue of their journey in the remembrance of past felicity.

What a contrast did their vivacity form against the joyless scene around us. It exhibited that trait of the human character, which can feel pleasure in the midst of danger; and happiness in regions of unproductive barrenness.

Having wearied themselves with singing and dancing, they laid down on the hard rocks to enjoy the refreshment of sleep; while my fancy dwelt upon Virginia, and complicated plans of futurity.

"Undoubtedly," thought I, "the lower ranks of life are not half so much exposed to vexations as those of greater refinement. What lofty cares interrupt the slumbers of these muleteers, on the tops of the mountains of Morena? while I, to whom they look up with envy, feel myself infinitely more unhappy. Whence arises this distinction? Are our joys and sorrows nearly poised? or, does a cultivated mind bring forth imaginary evils?"

In reflections like these I passed the time till the hour arrived for our journeying onwards. The guides and Raolo were quickly ready, and we

bade adieu, with some regret, to our rude shelter—the sun yet blazing with splendor.

We wound amongst the rugged roads of the mountains: now climbing by a narrow path, now proceeding down a dangerous steep; then edging the brink of a precipice, where the smallest slip would have been fatal; or traversing, with caution the narrow and gloomy defile, where every hollow might conceal a band of ruffians, and fancy might almost see them start upon the trembling traveller.

Towards evening the wind freshened, blowing cold over the tops of the mountains, whose bare sides afforded no foliage to shelter off the blast. Heavy clouds rose over the horizon, adding to the darkness and dreariness of coming night. I inquired how far we had to go before we arrived at the next inn?

“No less than four leagues,” replied one of the muleteers; “and these clouds drive on so heavily, that I am afraid, Senor, we shall not reach there by nightfall.”

“And do you know no nearer shelter, no goat-herds’ hovels, where we could find a night’s lodging?” said I.

“No, your Excellenza,” replied he. “This part of the mountain is so barren, that a kidling of a year’s growth could not browse upon it. We have nothing to do, but put forward, and trust to St. Michael.”

“That is an excellent sentiment,” said I. “If we always hope for the best, and defy the worst, we shall overcome many a difficulty.”

“You are perfectly right, Senor,” replied Raolo. “The man who feels every danger which may happen, is never ready when they do. A soldier, your Excellenza, should brave every weather, and every difficulty. He should be above fortune, if he would not have fortune use him ill.”

“I approve your courage, Raolo; but suppose

now we should be attacked by some troops of robbers?"

"O, for the love of Christ!" cried one of the muleteers, "don't suppose any such things, your Excellenza; what would become of us? I never had any relish for fighting in my life; and just now I think less than ever."

"There are very strange stories, it must be owned," said another, "I have sometimes listened till my hair bristled up an end. There, Senor, there is a cross stuck upon the edge of that rock, some traveller has been murdered there."

Each of the muleteers crossed themselves, repeating their *Ave Maria*.

"Do you know the story?" inquired I, willing to amuse the time with conversation: for I felt the gloom that was creeping around us affect my spirits, which had never regained their tone, since my adventure in the forest."

"It has been there," said Pedro, "ever since I can first remember. In former times, it used to be almost impossible to travel over the mountains and, in some places, the crosses stand so thick, you would think they were planted to grow there."

"You are very familiar with sacred things," said his companion, "for my part my blood runs cold when I see them; especially since I heard the story which old Jacintha told me one night at Toluca."

"What story was that?" said Jerome. "I never heard it and I have heard many strange things."

"If his Excellenza will give me leave," said the muleteer, "I will tell you now—It is not very long and you will find it very entertaining"

"How can that be, honest friend?" said I.

"It may very well be," replied he, bowing; but it begins to rain, and we shall be soon drenched to the skin."

I enquired if they knew of no shelter, such as we found at noon.

"No," replied Pedro, "would not for the uni-

verse descend into those glens; they look by this light, like so many unfathomable pits. I should think I was going down into the bottomless gulph."

"You make a strange comparison," said I. "If you all prefer a wet skin to braving the dangers of these unknown cavities, put on; and let us have the story Martin was going to entertain us with."

The evening was so dark, that we began to lose the distinct view of immediate objects; and surely no prospect could be so totally cheerless.

The rain spread a mist about us, and rendered the roads dangerous; while we feared to move from a direct line, in search of shelter, lest we should plunge down some precipice, or wholly lose the road. The muleteers could not dissemble their fears; and I had to urge Martin, several times, for his story, well knowing that talking banishes fear. After several loud hems, Martin began—his companions riding close, that they might attend his tale.

"A traveller who was mounted on a sorry ass, had to journey over the mountains alone without a guide, for he was very poor. He rode several days, till he came near the middle of the mountain. It was about nightfall that he arrived at the foot of a prodigious large cross, fixed up where a barbarous murder had formerly been committed.

"Beside the cross stood a mule, ready saddled and bridled, the bridle fixed to the cross; but as he drew near, he saw no owner for the mule, at which he very much wondered. He stopped his ass to look round, but could see nobody. 'This is wonderful strange!' said he to himself: 'this mule could not have been placed here without hands; and why, above all places in the world, place it on a cross?' I should have told you, that his surprise at sight of the mule, made him forget to repeat *Ave Maria*; a thing never to be omitted on these occasions by a good Christian.

“Well, there he stood considering what the mule should do in such a place without a master. ‘’Tis a thousand pities,’ thought he, ‘so fine an animal should be so exposed to the weather. He will be starved—some brute of a man will come by, and take him away. Why then may not I exchange him for my worn out ass, who is more used to hardship than this sleek looking beast.’

“Having settled this point of humanity with his conscience, he dismounted, and taking off the bridle, hung that of his ass’ in the place. He then mounted, overjoyed at the exchange, and admiring the adventure; but he no sooner touched the back of the mule, than away he galloped, scouring along the road, as if he would break the neck of his rider.

“The traveller endeavored in vain to check him by the bridle; he rode the more furiously, leaping prodigious chasms, and tearing down the most frightful precipices. The poor fellow would not have given a pin for his neck; and his bones were shaken in his skin like a sack of cucumbers.—But now we come to the most tragical part of the story.”

“Well said Raolo, with a laugh, “let us have it by all means; what became of the traveller?”

“You shall hear,” replied Martin. “The mule continued to drive on at a prodigious pace till he was all in a violent foam, passing along the narrowest roads within an inch of the edge; sometimes tearing up hill, and then flying down, till the traveller was almost dead with fatigue and fright.”

“Prithee, get him a little faster to the end of his journey,” said I.

“Please your Excellenza,” replied Martin, “he went as fast as he could; and it’s impossible to finish the story before he ends his career.”

“Well, he rode onwards, without being stopped or interrupted by any thing on the way; nor did

he meet with any living creature in his long course. He pulled hard at the reins to check the mule, but he continued still to ride on as he did at first: and what was more strange, his swiftness seemed even to increase."

"O, intolerable!" exclaimed I. "If he galloped as fast as thy tongue, and to as little purpose, I fancy he never reached the end of his journey."

"Yes, Senor," continued Martin, in a serious tone, "he galloped at a terrible rate, till he, all on a sudden, stood still, in a narrow, savage-looking hollow, where some thorns formed a cover over head, and concealed, even the twinkling of a star. The traveller did not at all like the looks of this spot. He began to spur and kick the beast to make him go on, but it was all in vain—he stood stock still. He beat him over the head with his whip, but the mule only hung his ears; he began to coax him, but he only wagged his tail and would not stir one step."

"I am afraid," said I, "we are pretty much in the same situation: tell us, however, how long he stood in that position."

"I can't say exactly how long, Senor, but there he stood; nor would all the traveller could devise make him stir one step. He dismounted and tugged at the bridle: the mule put his fore feet to the ground, and stood firm. He went behind and endeavored to shove him forward; but he might as well have attempted to push down one of the mountains. He began to think his feet might be fixed in some trap, and he lifted them out one by one, but the mule would not stir."

"And there your tale remains," said I, "like the traveller's mule."

"No, no," replied he, "I am not at the end of it yet. The traveller in amazement mounted again, and the mule began to neigh so loud, that all the cliffs re-echoed the sound, and he thought himself surrounded by a thousand others. The

ground on which he stood began gradually to move—”

“Bravo! bravo! honest Martin,” cried I, “this is a promising story truly.—So, as the mule would not go, the ground was obliged to undertake the journey!”

“You are pleased to be merry, Senor; but I can assure you, this is no joke. The ground, as I said, began to move, and to sink downwards, till the traveller, in affright, found himself up to the stirrup. In a moment after, it was up to his breast: and, before he could raise his hands to cross himself, he found himself in a cavern, where three fierce robbers, with whiskers from ear to ear, and rapiers that trailed upon the ground seized him, at once, by the collar.”

“Ah! dog of a wretch!” cried they, in a voice of thunder, “you would have stolen the mule, and the mule has stolen you. You will be a dead man in a minute, but first tell us what you have got about you.”

“For the sake of St. Dominique,” said the traveller, “spare my life. You will get nothing by killing me, gentlemen—I have not a maravidie about me—All my wealth was upon the back of my poor ass, doubloons and dollars.—I had not the time to remove them on to the back of that devil of a beast, before he rode away with me.—If you will only give me time, I will go and fetch it.”

“No, no,” replied the thieves, “we are not so easily done as that comes to, we will fetch it ourselves: in the mean time we shall keep you safe enough.” With that they dragged the poor trembling wretch into a large chamber of the cave, where he felt nothing beneath his feet but skulls and dry bones of travellers who had been trepanned in the same way, and his heart sunk within him.

“When he supposed the thieves at a distance, he began to think how useless it was for him to

spend his time studying over death's heads when he was no hermit ; and, taking up a strong thigh bone, he made use of it to force the door of his dungeon.

“ An excellent repast of meat and wine stood upon a table ; and being willing to have another meal before he should be starved to death, he fell to. The wine made him merry ; and, seeing a dress belonging to one of the robbers, he stripped off his own, being naturally fond of exchanges.

“ He admired the fierceness of his figure, armed with pistols and a long Toledo, and began to lose all apprehensions of the thieves. He considered, however, that it might be well to leave them to themselves when they should return ; and, as doubtless the mule, who so well knew the way in, must know the way out, he loaded him with some bags of hard coin, that the weight might cool his courage, and mounting him, began to drub him.

“ The mule, no doubt, thinking by the dress of his rider, that he had one of his masters to deal with, immediately struck into a long and dark passage, where the traveller was obliged to lay upon his breast along the animal's neck, to prevent his own being broken. A glimpse of light, at last appeared, and he found himself in a deep hollow, surrounded by rocks, from which the mule had a difficulty to extricate himself.”

“ I would not run so many dangers for all the money he got by it,” said Pedro.

“ What became of the traveller's ass, Martin ?” said Raolo.

“ Aye, truly, I had forgot, my honest cousin. There is a very long story goes about that same ass ; he had a very droll name, and that was Raolo.”

“ We all laughed at the fellow's humor, which had prevented our thinking too much of our situation, being completely drenched with the rain. It continued to pour down, while the wind pelted

us unmercifully, and almost took the mules from their feet.

We had still a considerable distance to ride before we came to the inn; and then the cheerless prospect presented of no accommodation. A general rule all over Spain.

"This is bitter weather indeed," said Pedro; "the poor beasts will be jaded to death, and what a fine day we had of it. Diab!o! if I don't think the inn has run away like the traveller's mule."

After this observation, we dropt into a profound silence, till, fear getting the better of Pedro, he first began to whistle; and then to sing with all his strength, as if to *out-noise* the storm, and deafen himself to its roaring. Martin and Jerome frequently ejaculated Diab!o! or crossed themselves as the gusts of wind caused them to bend over the necks of their mules. Raolo and myself rode on in silence; till Raolo ventured to observe, that we had not been so nearly drowned for many a day; or undergone so much fatigue since the storming of fort Oran.

"What a charming prospect," said Raolo, "we should now have of a storm on this heap of mountains, were it not that which ever way we look, it is equally dark; not so much to be seen as an old stump, stretching out his arms, like a giant, to devour travellers by night."

"It is now infinitely more sublime," said I. "Now you may fancy any thing you please, and dress up the waste in your own style. I wish however, this inn was a little nearer. It is the only addition I have any desire at present, to see made to the prospect."

"I should not wonder if we passed it in the dark," said Raolo: "we keep in the middle of the road to prevent breaking our necks down the steep, and we shall chance to ride all night."

"*O beatissimo neustra Senora!*" vociferated Pedro several times. "'Tis there! 'tis there!"

"What is there?" demanded I.

"The inn! the inn!" cried he. "*O beatissimo neustra Senora!* we shall now sleep in a sound skin, and hear the storm singing about us all the while!"

"You are run mad!" said Raolo. "I see no inn, nor any signs of it—where about does it stand?"

"There, there," cried he, right before us. Don't you see that little light sparkling through the windows? Aye, there we shall have a comfortable fire, and some of the best *aqua vitæ* in all Spain."

I now discerned the faint glimmer of a lamp, which promised no very cheerful welcome: but any shelter being preferable to the pelting storm, we quickened our mules, and soon found ourselves at the door.

The muleteers called aloud on Master Polo, the Host; but Polo did not choose to hear any thing but the storm, and all their efforts were useless. Martin dismounted and thundered with the handle of his whip against the door, but nobody returned any answer.

"They all are dead for certain," said he, "or deserve to be, for treating us in this scurvey way." Then discharging a stone at the door, as if he intended to break it open, he called aloud upon the Host. "If this is the treatment I am to meet with," cried he, "I shall change my bait, and never call, as I cross the mountains."

"If you never stop here," said I, "where will you put up? for we have not seen any thing like a house since morning?"

"Why that's true," replied Martin: "but when a man's drowned, and hungry, and dry, and cold, he never stops to choose his words."

"Nor must he choose his inn upon these wilds," said Raola.

"This is a selfish fellow truly," said I; "he knows civility is an useless ingredient where there is no choice. If he will not stir for our sake,

let us try what he will do for his own. We must use a stratagem of war—Call out fire lustily, my boys.”

The expedient had the desired effect. Polo opened the window in a hurry, to know what was the matter, and where the fire might be; but seeing all safe, he was retiring, muttering oaths at our disturbing his rest.

“Look’e Master Polo,” cried Martin, “by all the holy Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists and Martyrs! if you do not come down and open the door, I will set fire to your hovel, that we may dry ourselves as we stand!”

This brought Polo again to the window, demanding who we were, and what we wanted at that late hour.

“Come down quickly and open the door,” cried Raolo, “or you will have occasion to repent it the longest day you live. Are the king’s officers to stand begging at the door of a paltry inn while a fellow like you is dozing in a warm bed?”

Polo now made haste to open the door, terrified at the sound of the king’s officers and we entered a little miserable place, with a mud floor almost in a puddle. At the farther end was an open fire-place, without one spark to warm this wretched place.

Raolo seized some faggots, and I helped him to place them on the stove. A large fire was quickly made, and some rancid bacon and oil prepared by a little meagre figure of a woman, the picture of poverty and ill nature. She was only half dressed, in her hurry to attend us when she knew the respectability of the guests: and her brown skin peeped forth here and there, in no very tempting manner.

Hunger gave us appetite to the homely dish she provided; and a few glasses of aqua vitæ (which was excellent, being brought by the smugglers who travel this chain of mountains,) banished our sufferings in the storm from recollection.

I was so overcome with weariness, having for some preceding nights scarcely slept at all, that I desired nothing so much as a place to lie down upon. This was impossible on the ground apartment, unless I would have shared the floor with the hogs: and after some little treaty, the Hostess agreed that I should take their bed, while they would sit up. But of all the vile places I ever saw, I think this was the worst. It was composed of rags, so dirty, that it had certainly never been washed, since it was first new: add to this, that the vermine skipped about in flocks, and you will not wonder that weariness could not reconcile me to it.

A parcel of old mats, boughs, and a pair of ham-pers were then heaped upon the floor, to keep me from the mud; and placing my portmanteau for a pillow, I fell asleep to dream of Virginia and happiness.

The next morning we proceeded on our journey without meeting a single adventure, and arrived towards night at Calatrava; where I discharged the muleteers, and halted a day to recover the fatigue of passing the mountains. I hired a carriage for Toledo, to depart early the second morning: meanwhile I amused myself with viewing the town and its curiosities.

In strolling round towards evening, I came opposite the great church, which is a singular piece of fine workmanship. The people entering to vespers, I joined in the crowd. A great number of tapers were arranged as for some festival, and I walked through a long range of beautiful columns into the body of the church.

I had not taken my place many minutes, when a stranger entered, and took his seat beside me. He was so wrapped about the head that his features were obscured, and he seemed wholly absorbed in devotional duties. ¶

I observed, that, from time to time, he wiped a tear from his eye. I made no doubt but some hea-

vy distress hung upon him; or some grievous action disquieted his conscience. "I will speak to this man," thought I, "and if I have the power to help him, I will see what is to be none. Providence has, perhaps, brought us into this place for that purpose."

The music, which suddenly arose from a soft andante movement into a grand chorus, diverted my attention; and when I looked round again, he was gone. I felt sensible regret at his sudden departure; in which, perhaps, there was as much of curiosity as charity. I arose, and walked slowly down the nave of the church, amused by the various statues and ornaments of fret work constructed by the Goths; which had an admirable effect by the light of tapers and touched the mind with regret for the transience of human affairs; while piety, inspired by the solemn organ, seemed to point to scenes of more desirable happiness.

I was somewhat surprised, on perceiving the stranger who had excited my curiosity, leaning against a column, in a dark part of the church; so lost in deep reflection, that he did not appear to regard any passing object.

"Shall I interrupt his meditations?" thought I; "and will he not consider me an unwelcome intruder? There are moments in devotions, and situations in sorrow, which require not observance and shrink from the most refined services of friendship."

I turned half round in doubt how to act, when a motion made by the stranger, fixed my resolution to address him. "You select, Sir," said I, "the most retired part of the building—no doubt, as most suitable to the subject of your contemplation."

"Yes, Senor," he replied. "This gloomy building fits well the ideas fixed upon my mind.—Melancholy loves to brood in twilight shades."

"Will you deem me impertinent, if I seem to pry into those shades myself? I have not escaped without accidents of an unpleasant nature."

"I know it," said he, solemnly. "But to what do you particularly refer, Marquis?"

"Ha!" cried I, starting in amazement, "do you know me?"

"I do," replied he, lifting his fore-finger to his mouth, as a signal of silence. I know you, Marquis Albert de Denia.—I ought to know you! I know all your secrets. I am no stranger in the Castle of Montillo." He paused, uttering a deep groan; while I felt horror creeping upon me. I fixed my eyes upon him; but the obscure light reflected dimly on his figure.

"Do you then know the secrets of that terrible chamber?" said I. "Do you know——"

A drop of blood fell from my nose, on the back of my hand, as I held it out in the act of speaking. I paused at the moment I was going to mention the dreadful objects I had there seen. The stranger, or whatever he was, waiting my continuance, I was again opening my lips, when another drop startled me; but, fancying it merely a casualty, I began——

"Do you know——" A third drop fell upon my hand, and my lips closed in silent horror.

"Sure," thought I, "this is a warning not to mention these secrets—not to give sound to the objects of my sight."

"I do know," said he, "all the secrets of that place; but what particular would you express?"

"You know then why I am silent," replied I: these are subjects too dreadful to mention!—May I inquire who you are that possess this undesirable knowledge?"

"Who I am," said he, "you can never know—that knowledge would be death to you. But remember this and as you follow my advice you will do well—terrible, indeed, would be the breaking of my injunctions!—You must depart this very night; though not in the conveyance you intended. Padilla has sent an agent in pursuit of you, who will arrive at this place about midnight.

—You will find a chaise waiting at your inn; hire it, and be gone in an hour."

"But why such haste," said I. "In a town like Calatrava, assassins will not find protection."

"Be thankful for this warning. Is it for you to inquire the reasons?—Is not my standing here before you reason sufficient?"

He said this in a stern voice, and turning quickly into the dark, I lost him amongst the columns in an instant.

For some time I stood in a reverie of perplexed reflection. The accident was strange and unaccountable. From the partial glance I had of his features, I could form no recollection of his person: and his words impressed upon me an awe, the mystery of supernatural agency inspires. I doubted in my own mind whether it were the wandering spirit of Count Ferendez, or my guardian genius, which had put on mortal form to warn me of impending danger. The benevolence of his advice was not to be mistaken: and I carried my superstition so far, as to suppose the drops of blood which fell upon my hand, tokens of the ill that would follow on refusing his counsel.

Ruminating on this singular adventure, I returned to the inn; and, notwithstanding the warning I had just received, I started back at sight of a chaise, which that moment stood in the yard. The postillion was rubbing down his mules, and ordering a fresh supply; saying he was going to return to Toledo in an hour.

"Who are your passengers then?" said I; "and where did you come from?"

He replied, from Toledo, with a gentlemen, who had not been in Calatrava an hour, and had ordered him to this inn, where he was to find a person who would return with him; but on inquiry, there was no one there unengaged.

This was to me a full confirmation. "Do you know the person you brought hither?" said I.

"No," replied he, "I did not see his face; he was wrapped up as if he was ill."

"In a long dark cloak?"

"Yes," returned the lad, "the very same."

"We are perfectly right, then," said I. "I am the person you were to meet—make yourself ready—we will ride all night."

I called Raolo, and gave him orders to get every thing in readiness to be gone in an hour. He expressed his wonder by his looks, and his unwillingness by his delays; nor should I have been ready, had I not prompted him forward.

My eagerness to depart, at length overcame his respect, and he could not avoid inquiring if I had heard any sudden news.

"Yes, Raolo," said I; "it is of the utmost import that I should hasten to Madrid, from which I have already been too long absent. See, then, that our pistols are in order; load them with a brace of bullets, and take your camp sword from the baggage."

"You expect to meet the enemy, I suppose, Señor," said he, brightening with an expression of bravery in his countenance; "we shall be a match for something more than our number."

"You are a brave fellow, Raolo," I replied; "here are a couple of pistoles for you: and remember, I promise you a present, if we arrive safe at Madrid."

He drew back, ashamed to accept what seemed a bribe to his duty, and afraid to affront me by the refusal. I read his sentiments in the glow which suffused his cheek, and putting up the money, "Well," said I, "I will be your banker: if we are robbed on the road, I shall then be accountable." He seemed to thank me by a look; and, quitting the room, he made haste to execute my orders.

After an hasty meal, Raolo brought my pistols, and placed his own in his belt. "Every thing is ready, your Excellenza," said he. The night is

fine and clear—there is not finer weather in the world for travelling : though there is no moon, there are plenty of stars ; and your Eccellenza used to like to gaze on them, when we lay in camp many a night.”

“Aye, aye, Raolo,” said I ; “many a night we have lain there ; but now we must be doing other duty.”

The postillion sat upon his mules, cheering himself with a dram of aqua vitæ. Raolo mounted a horse he had hired, and which was to be left at Toledo : and I entered the chaise, which drove away at a furious rate.

CHAPTER X.

I GAVE myself up, as usual, to a variety of reflections, harassing my mind with conjectures which led to no positive conclusions. My spirits seemed strangely depressed, which I imputed to the surprise of so singular an incident, and I endeavored to rally my own weakness.

For three hours we continued to ride with speed. The night was fine and clear. I endeavored to trace the stars as we whirled along, but my mind admitted of no outward amusement, and I relapsed into thoughtfulness.

Some time after I was roused by Raolo, who informed me that two men on horseback, were advancing, whom it might be as well to prepare for

“We need not fear a number inferior to our own,” replied I, “and, probably, not so well armed. Your pistols are ready, I suppose.”

“Yes, yes,” answered he, “we shall show them sport : I was only afraid your Eccellenza might have been sleeping.”

“Did you ever know me to sleep on my post?”

"No, Senor, but you might have been sleeping to refresh before the hour of battle."

"Very well, Raolo," replied I, laughing, "'tis a pity you were not born a courtier; keep a good look out, and beware of surprise."

It was not long before I heard the clattering of horses, and two men of very suspicious appearance rode by us. They eyed us with a scrutinizing look, but from some motive rode on without attacking us. Possibly, thought I, they propose waiting for us in the narrow part of the road; or in some gloomy hollow, where we shall not have the warning of their horses' feet.

Raolo came up to the chaise door, and desired I would command the driver to halt a few minutes. "I do not like that fellow," said he; "I thought I observed some intelligent signs pass between him and those ill-looking fellows. Will your Excellenza question him?"

"Do you think he will confess any thing then? Depend upon it, he would not criminate himself?"

"Your Excellenza knows best," replied Raolo. "I thought it my duty to tell my suspicions—Have you got your powder-flask? for the hard riding, or else my carrying one of the pistols in my hand, has dashed out the priming."

"That must have been very careless," replied I: "ask the Post-boy if he has got a flask, I cannot find mine." Raolo then inquired of the driver, who answered very sulkily that he never carried any such combustible stuff about him.

"Never mind," said I, "take half the priming from the other pistol." Raolo took it from the holster—"by the Holy Pope!" exclaimed he, "this is in the same case——"

"Impossible!" cried I, starting at a thought which flashed across me; "you say you loaded the pistols before we set out?"

"Yes, I am certain of that," replied he; "I put a brace of bullets into each, and then laid them down in the kitchen, where I just stepped into the

yard to look at the horse I was to hire; and when I returned, there they lay."

"Ah!" exclaimed I, "could any thing be more thoughtless; somebody has been playing tricks, and we are caught in a fine trap. Be so good as to examine if the charge is in."

I examined my own, at the same time, and was confounded to find them without any ball, and filled up with ashes.

"We are betrayed," said I, in a low voice. "Some traitor has done this. We are fallen into an ambuscade. Your life and mine will, probably be the forfeiture of your neglect."

I leaped out of the chaise, and, going up to the postillion, brandished my sabre over his head: "Villain," cried I, "you are in this plot—Confess! Tell me who has employed you, or I will send your head rolling under the feet of your mules."

He begged me to have mercy upon him for the sake of a large family. "What is that to the purpose," cried I; "do you provide for them by robbery and murder? Villain, speak, quickly, all you know of this infernal scheme, or I will scrape the flesh from off your bones."

I dragged the rascal to the ground, for I was extremely agitated, and certainly should have killed him on the spot, had he not, on his knees confessed, that about noon, two men, the one like a gentleman, the other like his servant, came to the inn where he lived at Calatrava, at the farther end of the town, to where I had lodged, and hiring him as for a journey to Toledo, gave him a trifle to ride a couple of leagues from the town, and return by the Toledo road; that one of them went with him, and put up at the inn where I was, directing him in what he should say, the other returning to the town alone; and when my servant had charged the pistols, the horse was brought purposely to draw him out, in which time the servant entered and unloaded the pistols, telling him (the Post-

boy) they were to arrest the gentleman on the road by an order from the King, and took this caution to prevent bloodshed by our resistance; that they were to ride past us upon the road, and if all remained in the same state he was to cry Hem! and smack his whip twice in the air as they rode by; but if we had discovered the change put upon us, he was to cry *who goes there?* but not to interpose in case of attack. And lastly, that about a league further they were to wait for us in the dell, where the narrowness of the road would not admit my servant on the side of the chaise, by which means his assistance would be cut off. "And this, your Highness," continued he, "is all I know, if these words were the last I was to speak in this world, and may all the martyrs curse me if I know any more."

I silenced his clamorous cries for mercy by ordering him to rise. "Your treachery," said I, "does not merit pardon; but I will grant your life on condition you follow my orders. What sort of a person was he you call the master?"

"A dark, stern looking man, exactly like an inquisitor, and, indeed, I did think he belonged to the holy office."

"Was he not tall, his eye-brows bent, and meeting together?"

A reply in the affirmative confirmed my suspicion on Don Padilla. I next inquired the figure of his servant.

"He was a terrible looking man," said he, "with a malicious eye, so penetrating, that I was afraid when he looked at me."

This thought I, must be Jacques. I have never seen him but in deceiving lights, and this is my picture of him. I trembled for the safety of Fernando, when I had this instance of their malignant designs, and knew they must have either me or passed each other on a road where murder and outrage was common at noon-day. I had no time to spare for reflection in the present moment. I

stripped off my scarlet mantle, and exchanging with the postillion, obliged him to take my place in the chaise at the same time, solemnly vowing if he attempted to betray us by any signal, I would, in the first instance, wreak my vengeance upon him.

I then mounted myself upon the mule, and concealing my sabre under my dress, I ordered Raolo to keep, as usual, behind, and on the first assault, to charge at once with the sword.

Having made this arrangement, we drove forward, my heart beating with variety of emotions. I remembered the adventure in the church, and I had no longer any doubt but the mysterious stranger had been Jacques, who had followed me at a distance, to that sanctuary, where my own credulity contributed to betray me into his power. The drops of blood upon my hand now seemed an omen of my danger, which then I did not interpret aright. My apprehension for the safety of Fernando, was extremely painful, and contributed not a little to detach my mind from the immediate dangers that surrounded myself.

We rode forward till we arrived at the hollow part of the road, above which, on either side, were high cliffs, tufted with underwood: a place extremely well chosen for such an expedition.

No intimation gave us warning that any person was near, and I continued to drive forward at a rapid rate, urging the poor beasts at the utmost speed into the hollow, without making any show of apprehension. No sound interrupted the silence of night, but the noise we ourselves made: and, being arrived at the middle of the pass, I began to think our danger over, when a pistol was fired into the chaise from amongst the bushes which overtopped the road.

I took no notice of this assault, as we could not see any individual, and admired the design of this infamous transaction. I gave the mules a lash, when, possibly, angry at the postillion for not

answering their signal, one of them fired a shot at me, which hit one of the mules, and caused him to plunge and rear in an ungovernable manner. In an instant after, a carbine was fired into the chaise, and a loud cry from the miserable postillion made them conclude they had executed their business.

I judged from the number of shots that they had spent their first fire; and calling to Raolo, I commanded him to follow me, sword in hand. We clambered up the banks, and made good our entrance into the hanging thicket, without receiving any injury from two or three pistol shots which were fired at random.

When we reached the top of the banks, we found ourselves unopposed; nor could we, through the darkness of the night, discern the foe, who had not sufficient courage to wait the assault, though they had only the resistance of Raolo to fear, as they must have judged the valor of the supposed postillion a feint.

After searching round for some time, that they might not escape us by concealing themselves, we plunged our swords into every bush within fifty paces, and it was matter of conjecture how they could possibly have secured so silent a retreat.

Finding our researches useless, we returned to the road; but the chaise was gone. This was an unpleasant circumstance to persons in our situation. All my baggage and letters were in it. But fortunately none from Fernando relative to our suspicions, nor any document that could give Padilla light into our intentions, supposing that he should have an opportunity to examine.

The most probable conjecture was that the wounded mule had communicated its fright to his companion, and run away with the postillion.

Raolo's horse stood quietly at about one hundred yards distance, and mounting him together, we proceeded at an easy rate. Raolo delighting

himself with the courage of the enemy, and the military trick we had played upon them.

We continued slowly forward, without meeting the smallest trace of the chaise. Towards the dawn of day we arrived at a little farm-house by the road-side. We alighted to seek some refreshment, and to provide some better conveyance. The instant we stopped at the gate, the owner of the cottage came up to us, and, with visible emotion, inquired if we were the persons who had been robbed on the road.

I was surprised at this question, and replied that we had been assaulted, but, I believed, not by common robbers, demanding, at the same time his reason for the question.

"About two hours since," said he, "somebody knocked violently at the gate. It was dark, and I was just rising, for we begin our labours betimes. I was coming out at the door, with a lantern, to see what was the matter, when two men, strangely muffled up, ordered me to extinguish the light and follow them, or I should be a dead man in a minute. I could do no more than obey them. A chaise stood on the road, and I saw somebody in it, but they did not speak. "Here, said one of the men, "take this parcel and those trunks, and give them to the next traveller, who will own them."

"I knew not what to do in the business, as I feared being called to account, some way or other as having a share in the plunder, and yet I wondered they should be so free to part with it, unless they had taken out all the valuable articles. Well, Senors, their repeated threats frightened me, and having laid all the bundles upon the ground, I took up a trunk to carry it into the house. When I returned for another, the two cavaliers, who were mounted on horses and the chaise, with the person who did not speak, were gone. Two of the bundles they took from the chaise are stained with blood, and I fear some poor

gentleman has been murdered by these ruffians; and now that I see you, I hope it is not your master who has been robbed. I assure you it was from force I admitted the goods."

I had waited without interrupting him. "I believe you, my honest fellow," said I, taking off the postillion's coat; "this garment deceived you. I am a nobleman, who have been traitorously way-laid, and I imagine these articles you mention are mine; if so, they bear the name of Denia. Can you describe the persons of the men you saw?"

"It was too dark," replied he, they were in a tremendous passion, cursing and swearing at some mistake. I heard one of them say it would be best to fly, and the other muttered something, of which I could only make out the word - body."

I was very well pleased at this information, and the countryman, whose name, I think, was Tormes, being an open-hearted hospitable man, we sat down to a rural breakfast, to us extremely welcome, after the events of the night.

I made no doubt, from the blood on the bundles and the words of the men, that the postillion had received his death from their hands; "and thus it generally is," said I, "though not always in so visible and signal a manner, that the intentions of villains devolve upon themselves. Our destruction this night, appeared inevitable; betrayed by a miscreant to the vengeance of two men, who laugh at crimes if they can perpetrate them with impunity. Confiding in our own arms, when that confidence might have been destruction: no way to escape or defend ourselves appearing; yet their designs are rendered abortive, and their weak and wretched instrument destroyed by themselves."

My spirits experienced a considerable flow upon this event, the landscape from the window appeared delightful, and the loved plains of Grenada seemed again to bloom before me. Gentle swellings loaded with grain broke the continuity of the level ground, and varied cultivation diversi-

fied the prospect to the eye, and painted the face of nature with variety of tints.

It was now the autumn, and the glow of ripening fruitage gladdened the view. Nature's richest stores were spread before her children, and there wanted only the thankful heart, and the tranquil mind, to spread happiness over the scene.

After a few hours rest, I dispatched Raolo to Toledo to procure a chaise. While he was absent, I indulged myself in a reverie of pleasing reflection, which the imagery of this fine province increased; and while I sat wandering over the views before me, the tender recollection of Virginia stole upon me, and the high mountains that divided us, seemed as a barrier to our meeting any more.

Nothing could be more inviting to the frenzy of composition which lovers universally feel, than the glowing country before me, and I have no doubt that love gave birth to the Muses. While I sat in the window I wrote these lines, the faults of which you must charge to the folly of love, for, though it is the origin of rhyming, it, by no means inspires the higher pieces of poetry.

THE SIGH.

Go, gentle Sigh, to ease my breast,
And on Virginia's bosom rest;
Go, gentle Sigh, my heart now swelling,
And in her bosom make thy dwelling.

Go Sigh, and bearing as you go
The scents of all the flowers that blow;
Waft each perfume that breathes of pleasure,
To her, the pride of Nature's treasure.

Go, gentle Sigh, and speed thy way,
Warm from my heart without delay;
Pour in her ear the love-lorn ditty,
And sweetly soothe her soul to pity.

Go, vagrant, go, o'er dale and hill,
Nor stay thee near the tinkling rill:
Nor whisper in the whisp'ring rushes;
Nor linger where the water flushes.

Let not the blushing village lass,
Attract, as o'er the lawns you pass:
Nor let her witching graces stay thee,
Lest tales unmeaning should betray me.

Go, gentle Sigh, to where the maid,
Reposes in the tranquil shade;
Her ear with love's complainings greeting,
Soft as thyself; and, ah! as fleeting.

Or, if she thee disdain to hear,
Thy pinions lightly waving near;
Still in her wanton tresses straying,
Or in her garments idly playing.

Go, mingle with her balmy breath,
Nor fear her anger will be death;
For life renewed shall bless thy daring,
With her, ethereal zephyrs sharing.

Return, then, gentle Sigh, return,
With rapture flow, with ardor burn;
Inhaled by me (with bliss past telling)
My breast shall be thy constant dwelling.

By the time I had run my thoughts to the last fancy, Raolo returned with a chaise. He had made inquiry upon the road, but had gained no information, and I made no doubt of their having, before the day should betray them turned aside into some obscure cross-road, where they might dispose of the postillion; or, probably concealed themselves in a forest not above a league distant, where they might bury him and depart at night.

At Toledo I made no delay, being impatient again to visit my paternal home, from which I had been near two years absent. My mother received me with a transport of satisfaction. At her entreaty I consented to quit the army and become a civil member of society. I found my fortune extensive as the honors it has to support, and I seemed to have only one wish to gratify to render me above the frowns of fortune. but without which her gifts lost half their value.

I received letters from Fernando amongst the military despatches which tranquilized the fears I had for his safety. He spoke of his good health, and hinted at the mysteries which yet disturbed him. He seemed unwilling to trust matters of consequence by this doubtful conveyance, and I might acknowledge, that I could only surmise his situation from dark and distant phrases.

I employed a nobleman of my acquaintance, and a person for whom I knew Don Padilla had some respect, to interfere in my favor, making him propositions that might have satisfied a prince but he rejected all my overtures with unqualified contempt, protesting, by all the universe, he would sooner hang his daughter upon a tree of the forest, than give her to a man, whom he considered as his most virulent enemy, and whom he hated with the greatest bitterness.

It was easy for me to guess the fears that rankled in his mind. He was far from ignorant that I was informed of his secrets, and wanted only positive proof to strip him of all his possessions. I likewise knew that in the midst of all his luxury he lamented having nothing but girls, who would carry his fortune into other houses if they married, and his name would be forever extinct. This passion for an heir, united with licentiousness, had led him several times to offer his hand to different ladies since the death of Lady Zidana, and their refusal had increased the disease of his mind.

The last letter I received from Fernando is near

twelve months since. It informed me, that, from reasons of imperious necessity, he had changed his regiment, joining one that was under orders of embarkation for Ceuta in Barbary: he begged me to remember his unfortunate engagements, and pity the ill fortune of my friend.

I have applied through various channels to discover if he yet lives; but ineffectually; all my information being, that he was taken prisoner in a sally made against the Moors. I have wearied you with a tedious narrative, Marquis, but I shall come immediately to what interests myself.

It was now nearly six months since I had become the slave of a superstition, or the victim of a deep and unrelenting vengeance I had no power to avert.

It was in the gardens of Aranjuez where I delight to ramble, that I may indulge my taste for reflection, that I first experienced this strange and inconceivable event.

I had laid down upon a bank of flowers watching the dimpling waves of the Tagus as they chased each other. Sometimes wearying my imagination about the fate of my friend, or picturing the pleasures I should share in this romantic spot, if Virginia could sit beside me, or ramble through the fragrant shades of orange groves and myrtle alleys; when I heard a voice clear and distinctly pronounce my name three times.

I looked round to discover who it was, not knowing that any one was near me, but all again remained silent, and I could not perceive any person in the gardens. I called to inquire who wanted me. "Listen!" said a clear and soft voice, at which I arose, but could see nobody, though, to my judgment the voice seemed within a few paces. I paused in wonder, and the same voice said, "Listen, Marquis Albert de Denia, thou must die!"

An affecting palpitation seized me. I had scarce power to stand, much less to demand an explanation of this *unseen*. I heard not the smallest rus-

tle amongst the shrubs: I sat down, for I was unable to stand, and revolved in my mind all the omens of supernatural incidents which had attended me. The advice of my father's death, the drops of blood in the church of Calatrava, confirmed my mind in the truth of this indefinite oracle.

I waited in dreadful apprehension, expecting every moment, that my ears would be pervaded with a repetition of the dreadful prophecy, or that my sight would be shocked by some awful phantom; but no shade or sound came near me, except the sighs of the wind amongst the leaves.

I endeavored to reason myself into spirits, by attributing the whole to a temporary delusion of high wrought imagination, but what imagination could embody the winds, or give to the breezes articulate sounds?

The prediction fastened on my weakened soul; all the energies of my mind could not repel its attack. You know the gardens of Aranjuez are formed on an island in the middle of the Tagus: no person is admitted to land there without permission of the gardeners, or entitled to rank. I inquired of them, if any stranger had been admitted; but, for several hours, they had seen no one except myself. For what purpose, also, would any person take the trouble to act a farce of this nature?

Thus I perplexed myself, and the following day repaired to the same spot, which, indeed, was my favorite place in the garden. I walked cautiously round it, examining the rose trees and other sweet scented shrubs, which formed a little wilderness of fragrance, and, having satisfied myself that no human being was near, I sat down to wait the oracular sounds.

I waited a long while, every moment scaring, yet expecting, to hear the same voice. I did not wait in vain, I heard myself again called, and again my death was announced. On the third day the same singular mandate came to my ears, but after that time I heard it no more.

I wondered every morning when I awoke, that I could again perceive the clear beams of the light. So powerful was the effect of this vague mandate, that I fancied my health to be gradually declining, and felt a decay of all my faculties.

To relieve my mind from this burden, (for I was ashamed to confide in any person, lest I should only excite ridicule at my credulity) I endeavored to find amusement in public assemblies; but wherever I went, the words—*Marquis Albert de Denia thou shalt die*, rung in my ears, and pervaded every moment of pleasure.

I endeavored to reason myself into better judgment: I know that I must die, said I; there needed no superior agency to persuade me of that truth, but *when*, is the question. On this, the voice said nothing, and this was the only point, where more than human intelligence was wanting.

This consideration gave me hope. I wondered with myself at the strange turn my mind had taken, so different from the common course of human reflection. I became fonder of study, and religion being a subject suitable to the then tone of my mind, I frequently attended its duties. The solemnities of the church ceremonial admirably fitted my thoughts, and I began, insensibly to lose a taste for life. I sighed for some friend to communicate with, and the memory of Fernando perpetually occurred. I had little doubt but he had fallen into some secret snare, laid for him by the agency of Padilla, but it was not possible for me to revenge his death.

One Sunday evening I had been at vespers, when a funeral dirge had been chanted, and the solemn service particularly touched my soul with the most melancholy ideas. Such, thought I, as I leaned upon a pillar, will be the sounds that these very walls may vibrate, when I myself shall be stretched upon the cold bier. The same solemnities will accompany my inanimate body to the tomb, when I shall moulder into dust and incorporate with the

elements. What then, and where will be this certain something within me, which now reflects and *is*?

Lost in profound meditation I returned home, and after an hasty repast, retired to rest. In the middle of the night I was awakened by an heavy sigh, which seemed as from some person in the room. I was startled and demanded who was there. No one answered, and, thinking myself deceived, I turned again to sleep. But I had scarcely closed my eyes, before a deeper sigh caught my ear. I started up in bed and looked round, but could not see any thing.

I listened to catch any sound, if the person should stir, and again I heard the same voice that I had heard in the garden, at Aranjuez, pronounce the fatal words—“*Listen! Marquis Albert de Denia thou shalt die!*”

I shrunk back on my bed with a deep groan. I expected that the next moment might be my last, and I seemed already to feel the pangs of a final dissolution. I ventured, after a little time, to raise my eyes. I beheld on the opposite wall, the same dreadful words, in a scroll, circled by death's heads, of varied colored fire: my senses faded away before the phenomenon, and it would not have been astonishing if I had actually lost the powers of breathing.

I lay, I know not how long, insensible. I awoke it is true, but it was only to a certainty that I must soon sleep for ever. I resolved, without more delay to arrange all my temporary concerns, and sent immediately for a notary. My friends wondered at my singular proceedings, and though I could perceive they fancied me a little disordered in my head, I was too tenacious of the secret I possessed to make any one my confidant.

It is wonderful what power the imagination possesses over the body. Persons who tell us we have no souls, because the body ought not to act upon spiritual being. 'nigh!' as well say we have

bodies, because the mind, which is immaterial, *cannot* act upon palpable substance.

I wrote a long farewell letter to Virginia, which I charged Raolo personally to deliver after my death. Indeed I had some time indulged the fancy that she herself was already dead, never having heard from Gonzalez, and the remembrance of my dream, upon the stairs of the eastern wing, confirmed all my forebodings. I repeated frequently to myself—Yes, charming saint, I shall soon follow thee through those starry regions, where I once beheld thee ascending into glory.

My mother already lamented the untimely death of her son, and my friends gave me over as lost. The claims of honor and ambition could not awaken my attention—I secluded myself wholly within the walls of my palace. My studies were entirely religious, and my amusement the performance of sacred music. This was the only employ that could catch my attention, for my mind sunk fast towards insanity.

CHAPTER XI.

. But 'tis strange:
And often times, to soothe us to our harm,
The instruments of darkness tell us truths,
Win us with honest trifles, to betray us
In the deepest consequence.

ONE of the best physicians in Madrid attended me, but he could not remove the pressure on my spirits. In about a month I was confined to my bed, and my dissolution rapidly approached. Raolo attended me almost night and day, and endeavored to divert my attention with discourses on Virginia, he no doubt, suspected that half my

grief arose from the hopeless situation of my addresses. He exerted all his ingenuity to inspire me with hope, and to destroy the idea that haunted me of her death : but of what avail are arguments when the senses are untuned?

The fever preyed upon my spirits, and my strength was exhausted. A burning thirst tormented me, which no medicine could assuage, and I lay in a state of torture. I was emaciated to a skeleton, and ardently desired death, as a relief from a misery which no medicine or aliment could remove.

One night, when my strength was fast ebbing away, for the fountain of my life seemed dried up, I lay without power of motion, partly supported by pillows, as I found greatest ease in that position. Raolo sat beside me in a chair, waiting for the period that was to deprive him forever of his master: my mother sat upon one edge of the bed, and her stifled grief gave me pain. I ardently wished for something to cool the intolerable fire which seemed to run along my veins; but I had not power to move my tongue, which was parched to the roof of my mouth. The hour of midnight was sounded by the clocks of Madrid, and the profoundest silence remained

From the breathing of my mother and Raolo, I judged them to be asleep, which I wondered at, considering their attention. I found myself become faint; I endeavored to raise my eyes to take a last look of a parent who had ever treated me with indulgence, before I closed them for ever upon mortal and terrene existence.

The lamp burnt dim; but whether it was deception or no, I beheld a person clothed in white, of a most singular fashion, sitting in a chair at the bed's foot. I strained my sight to gaze upon this phantom. The light of the lamp gleamed upon him, and I saw clear and distinct the venerable features of my late father. I cannot say I was much alarmed; fear had lost its power, and I lay gazing upon this beloved object with a mixture of

pleasure, and wonder, and grief. The yellow tint of death overshadowed his countenance, his eyes wanted the keen fire they were wont to express, and when he turned them upon me they appeared glazed and fixed. His dress was like nothing I had ever beheld, and when he stood up, it gave a majesty and solemnity to his figure which mortality can never assume.

He stretched out his hands towards me as he stood at the foot of my bed. A faint smile spread upon his face as he pronounced with a hollow, yet soft voice: *Albert, my son, thou art not yet to follow me; thou shalt not yet die.* Then pointing with his right hand to a table, where stood some fine fruit my weakness had not permitted me to taste, he again smiled, and raising his eyes with the elevated dignity of religious resignation, he turned silently away, and slowly quitted the chamber.

For some time, after the disappearance of this awful figure, my mind was in a state of unutterable satisfaction. The words he had uttered were as a flash of lightning upon the bosom of the agitated ocean. They spoke peace and hope to my soul. I have since inquired with myself whether this appearance could have been reality. The fever I labored under dwelt upon my spirits, and it might be the mere delusion of fleeting images through my brain; but whether it was truth or a fiction I shall never learn on this side the grave: be it what it would, I found strength sufficient to awaken Raolo, and asked for some fruit.

After eating a pomegranate, the burning thirst left me, and I felt new life animate my existence. A prodigious weight seemed removed from my head, I thought clearly, and reasoned with calmness. I recovered my health and strength in the course of a short time, and again ventured abroad into the world, where I received as many congratulations as though I had actually made my appearance from the grave.

My mind possessed a state of tranquillity which diffused satisfaction into my thoughts, and the world and worldly motives again resumed their force. I had but too long neglected to fulfil a particular injunction of my father's will, which was to repair the mansion-house, on the banks of the Tagus, where he usually spent the months of harvest. In this place I hoped to enjoy repose, and, as I took no part in public business, I resolved to lead a life of tranquillity and leisure. I dispatched Raolo with orders to collect workmen, and repair one of the wings which had long been in a shattered condition; and I proposed to find amusement in the plans I drew up for considerable improvements of the extensive gardens around me.

While I was thus planning schemes of future ease, a new calamity arose in my family, in the sudden death of my mother, who only lay ill twenty-four hours. It seemed as if some malignant spirit had been permitted to overwhelm me with distress. I had scarcely returned from the grave of that tender relation; indeed, I was sitting in my own library the same evening, when a servant put into my hand a letter, which a messenger had just brought me from my old house-keeper in the country. I opened it, and was struck with astonishment & grief at its contents. I believe I have the very letter in my cabinet—Yes, this is it.

“Honored and dear Senor,

“I am almost killed with fright at the terrible accident that has happened. Raolo came down here, and hired a number of workmen, who began pulling and driving, and I thought would have torn the house in pieces. Your Excellenza knows the ruined state of the west wing; well, this they began to repair, and were getting forward apace for the little time; but alack! who knows what will happen in this world: only last night we all went to bed well, and this morning—But I

must write methodically. Last night, after we had been some time in bed, the wind began to blow rising to a perfect hurricane, not a cloud was to be seen, for I was obliged to leave my bed, expecting every moment that the house would tumble upon us. It rocked as if it had been an earthquake. I rang the alarm bell to assemble the servants together. We all of us expected not a stone would be left standing; when all on a sudden we heard such a dreadful crash, as if not only the whole house but the whole world had been dashed in pieces. The servants set up a great scream, and I expected every moment to be crushed in pieces. In an hour the wind became calm, and I then ventured to stir to see what was the matter. The whole west wing, your Excellenza, is blown down; two workmen were killed in the ruins. Raolo is no where to be found, and I am waiting in the greatest anxiety for your arrival to give directions."

You may naturally suppose, my dear Marquis, the effect such a letter was calculated to have upon me, just returning from the funeral of my mother. The account seemed so strange, so out of the course of nature, that I doubted my own eyes. The non-appearance of Raolo, afflicted me more than the loss of the west wing. "Some fiend certainly torments me," said I, laying down the letter. "I know not how I have incurred such persecution, unless Don Padilla is in league with the devil." The sentence arose without reflection, but it produced a long train of thought. The objects I have seen in the Castle of Montillo, particularly in that chamber I had accidentally discovered, seemed to give some color to this suspicion, and I was within a trifle of sinking again into my former malady.

I sighed earnestly for some friend to whom I might communicate my reflections, but all my acquaintance were too much engaged with their own

interests, or too trifling, to share with me a secret of this nature. I had lately visited places of public amusement; but, if, within the circle of my acquaintance, I could not find a friend, how should I discover that gem beneath the disguise of festive mirth, where all assume manners and characters different from truth.

I hastened the next morning to witness the devastation of my house, and found all things in confusion. The materials were scattered by the wind half over the grounds, as if some mischievous spirit had been sporting in the air. I employed a number of people to remove the ruins, where they lay in heaps, if possible to discover Raolo; but what is inconceivable, not the smallest trace remained of him, and I was almost tempted to credit the story of the servants, who asserted that Lucifer had carried him away in a whirlwind.

I remained near three weeks on my estate to give directions, when learning your return from Portugal, and admiring the character your conduct there had procured you; which resembled much the friend I had lost, I resolved myself to converse with you, and the events of last night have determined my choice sooner than my caution might otherwise have required.

It was with extreme surprise that I learnt this evening by accident that Don Padilla and his daughter Almira were in Madrid. You may judge from what you have just heard how much my introduction to Padilla would have been to your disadvantage; I, therefore, employed myself to better purpose, in inquiries amongst the servants but I have been unable to penetrate into his reasons for immuring Almira, unless to gratify his evil disposition. See, then, my friend, the situation in which I stand; lend me your counsel, and give me your heart. Let not a whisper of my secret pass over your lips, and we will, if possible, counteract Padilla; and beauty and merit will be our reward."

Here the Marquis of Denia concluded his narrative, which had sunk into the heart of his friend, and raised in his mind wonder he could not conceal, and an interest he resolved to pursue.

"I am yours," said he, reaching out his hand to the Marquis. "To obtain Almira and Virginia, to rescue them from this ugenerous treatment, and to bring Don Padilla to justice, is a noble exploit, and what we owe to the public. It is for us who possess wealth and power to step forward as the instruments of justice, to protect the weak, to redress the wrongs of the innocent, and to punish the guilty."

The Marquis of Denia smiled at the ardour of his young friend. "What pity," said he "we did not live, at least, one or two ages ago, we might then have mounted our mettled coursers, and pranced away in glittering armor to rescue ladies, and to fight with giants."

"And why not now," replied Antonio. "Are the refinements of modern times to supercede virtuous actions? Had I been in love with Virginia, I would, ere this, have carried her away, sword in hand, from the castle. What enterprise could be more congenial to a generous mind? The ardour of such an undertaking would have prevented you from sinking into that painful disease, and your reward would have been a prize worth contending."

"But remember," said Albert, "that it would be her father you had to oppose. You have had no experience of this man. A failure in the attempt would have involved its object in certain ruin, and a convent for life, would have been the least effects of his vengeance. I have learnt from Count Potenza that such is his design with regard to Almira; but his motives are too deeply buried in his own breast, even to rise to the eye of friendship."

Antonio expressed his apprehension at this intimation; he earnestly entreated his friend to think of some expedient to prevent such a design. They

discoursed together till the sun had risen far above the horizon, and want of sleep made the eyes of Antonio weary; for he had not, like his friend, been accustomed to watching; and they separated under agreement to meet again in the evening.

Antonio retired to his home, and the Marquis of Denia descended to his garden, to plan some means of procuring an interview with Almira. He had some acquaintance with Count Potenza, and he proposed to wait upon him for information. Want of rest the preceding night rendered action unpleasant, and he sat in a little arbor of evergreens, watching the playing of a fountain before a sloping green, and settling in his mind to wait upon the Count after the usual hour of Siesta.

The interest Almira had created in the breast of Antonio pleased him, it being a double link to an unqualified friendship, and a chain which bound him in his own service. The fatal incidents which preyed upon his mind by being divided would be lessened; and were no other advantage to result superior to the pleasures of confidence, that alone was inestimable to a man laboring, as he did, under a singular train of events; which seemed to mark him as the victim of persecution he had neither power to foresee or to control.

He endeavored to suggest the reasons which could have induced Don Padilla to take so far a journey, and for such a purpose. Why Almira, rather than Virginia, had incurred his anger, he could not conceive.

The day was clear and warm, and the tranquillity of the garden invited him to sleep. For about an hour his thoughts were suspended by slumber, when he was suddenly awakened by an hasty step across the path. He looked up, and started at sight of Raolo in a travelling dress, covered with dust as if he had that moment returned from a long journey.

"Ha! my brave fellow," cried the Marquis,

"where have you been? You seem to have some of the dust of my palace about you. Are you just returned from your travels?"

"Yes, your Excellenza," replied Raolo, in a sorrowful tone, "I am only this moment returned, and I had much better staid at home."

"Then your journey was voluntary," cried the Marquis, more surprised than before. "Where in the world have you been?"

"Where I had much better not have been," replied he. "It is not for heads such as mine, to think of succeeding where wisemen fail. A private soldier should never act without orders: but I intended to have taken the garrison by surprise, and I hope your Excellenza will forgive me."

"Forgive you," repeated the Marquis, "I must first know your crime. Sit down, Raolo, and do not fear to tell me every thing; you know I overlook much when the fault is acknowledged. This was a strange adventure of yours—sure you have not been to the castle of Montillo."

"Your Excellenza has guessed right," replied Raolo, in a tone of humility. "You remember your orders were to fit up the house, and furnish what was wanting till you came; so, judging from myself, I thought a lady would be absolutely necessary, and what lady so welcome as the particular one of our choice; and so——"

"And so what?" cried the Marquis, scarcely knowing whether to be angry or pleased. "Go on sir."

Raolo turning his whip in his hand, began: "I knew that your Excellenza had repeatedly sent letters to the old steward at the Castle of Montillo, and your never receiving any, naturally led you to conclude your lady dead; for a mistress might as well be dead as not to answer her lover. Beside, I thought all your illness arose from pining after the lady, and I resolved in my own mind to carry her off to your country house, and surprise you when you least expected."

"I arrived safe at the little hamlet, about a league from the castle, where I thought it best to take up my lodging; and having there some little acquaintance, I was heartily welcomed to the cottage of honest Perez, and his two very pretty daughters."

"And these two very pretty daughters have stolen thy senses," said the Marquis.

"I hope not, your Excellenza: I have so little myself, that it would be a pity to lose them for the sake of a woman.

"Well, Perez," said I, after his first surprise was over, "how goes all at the castle? All in the old way, I suppose? The ladies are not married yet, are they?"

"No, no," said Perez, shaking his head as if he wanted to look wise: "Don Glum never lets any body see them. There they are, mewed up like two nuns. Gemini, says I to myself when I think what a pity it is—Now if I were a great gentleman, I'd soon scale the castle walls, and carry off these pretty charmers. O, by the Mass, what a glorious passion old Glum would be in! It would do one's heart good to see him at half a league's distance."

"But suppose you was in the garden, Perez, how could you contrive, perhaps they never come there?"

"Yes, yes," replied he, "I know they do: there's my daughter Marta, frequently goes with curds and cream to the castle, and she has once been in the gardens, helping the ladies to gather flowers: and she says they sigh so, and look so pale, that it grieves my heart."

"If that be the case," said I, "you will not object to my endeavoring to speak to them. Your daughter, Marta, can carry a line from me, and give it to the lady Virginia's own hand. I can easily get over the old tottering wall near the river side, and hide myself in the green temple. Perez would have bough shy, when he found that I

was in earnest; but I silenced his scruples with a double doubloon, which the scholars at Toledo used to say was the boldest figure in rhetoric. Is old Glum at the Castle?" said I. "He's not gone again to Grenada?"

"There has been the devil to pay," returned Perez, grinning. "Nothing would satisfy him at his years, but he must have a young wife, and so it came out what his visits to Grenada had been for."

"What do you say, Raolo?" cried the Marquis. "Is Don Padilla married again?"

"No, Senor," replied Raolo; "he was only going to be, but a stranger arrived just as he was leading the bride to the altar, and the match was broken off in confusion. Nobody knows who the stranger was, as he did not stay half an hour in the place; but as soon as he delivered his message, and created all the confusion he could, he mounted and rode away. Some people say it was no human being, but the ghost that frightened away the guests on the night of his marriage with Lady Zidana: but whatever, or whoever it was, Don Padilla was cheated of a wedding."

"This was all that I could learn about the matter. I lay by three or four days disguised like a peasant, never stirring from the cottage while there was as much light as to see one's nose. Well, your Excellenza, little Marta's day came to go to the castle, so I gave her a billet, just to say who I was, and where I would wait for the lady."

"Little Marta soon conned over her lesson, and no doubt acquitted herself very dexterously. The ladies were in a strange flutter at the unexpected news of my coming from the *handsome Marquis*; for so little Marta told me they called your Excellenza; but she could not get them to promise to meet me. I fancied that I knew something about the character of the women, and I would have laid

my last suit of regimentals to a maravidie, that one or both would be there.

"Accordingly, as soon as it was dark, I stole through the bye-paths till I came to the old wall of the garden, where it stands on the bank of the river. I found it more difficult to climb than I had supposed, and it was with some hazard I got safe into the garden, I picked out my way as well as I could, and after stumbling about a little, reached the evergreen temple. I listened to hear if all was safe: for, thought I, the old Don may have some suspicion, though I did not conceive how; but, your Excellenza, when one's mind misgives them, they are afraid of their shadow."

"That is most true, Raolo," said the Marquis: "it is thence that villains are generally cowards: but proceed."

"I hid myself amongst the rose bushes, and waited there till the clock struck twelve. How the old castle echoed with the heavy sounds. I would rather be guard upon an out-post than in such a situation again; for I then recollected all the frightful stories I had heard about the castle being haunted; and now that the ladies did not appear, I wished myself safely back. Well, the half-hour chime went by, and no ladies came near me, so I began to think they had lost their curiosity; and so, thought I, I have made all this long journey for the purpose of laying here all night, and may now go back like a boy that has forgot his message. Presently I heard somebody stepping lightly along the path, and as they came near, Raolo! Raolo! Raolo! says they, in a low voice, which I knew directly belonged to one of the ladies, it was so soft, and so sweet, and so frightened.

"Here am I, lady," said I, jumping up, and stepping into the path.

"O, merciful Virgin!" exclaimed she. "I am wild with terror and apprehension. What brings you hither, Raolo! How does your master?"

"Charming Virginia!" ejaculated the Marquis: "did she indeed inquire after me?"—"No, Senor," replied Raolo.—"No," cried the Marquis, "did you not say so this moment?"

"Aye, Senor, but I did not say who.—It was not Donna Virginia, it was Donna Almira. I made the same mistake at first myself in the garden." "I must not stay a moment," said Almira; "my sister Virginia has mislaid the letter you sent, and we know not where it is: she was too much flurried to come. Have you heard lately from the Marquis's friend, Fernando?"

"Yes, yes," said I, "he was in good health and spirits. The Marquis, my master, is building a new house, and I have stolen away to see if I could not steal him a wife to be a mistress of it; for you know, lady, an house without a mistress is no house at all.—She laughed, and inquired if I was really in earnest in the scheme, and why your Excellenza did not come, and how I would manage so difficult a business, and a hundred questions in a breath; just like all the rest of the ladies, thought I at the time, but I did not tell her so. I replied, that on the following night, if she and lady Virginia would be in the garden at the same hour, I would have a boat ready on the river, and a ladder fastened to the wall: when nothing could be more easy.

"Perhaps in words, but not in fact," replied Almira. "I have run a thousand hazards to-night, and must be back in a moment."

"In one moment, lady," said I, "you shall return: but after I have traversed so many leagues, it will be an ungracious reception my master will give me if I return alone. Surely it would be a life of greater pleasure in Madrid than here?"

"I confess," replied she, "if it were not for the danger, and if I could persuade Virginia, I should be willing to go. I am tired enough of this dreary, frightful old castle."

"Are you so," cried a voice harsh as the crashing of thunder, "by the deeps of hell thou shalt not remain long within it."

"My father!" shrieked the terrified lady, and fell upon the steps of the temple in a swoon. Don Padilla paid no attention to his daughter, but drawing his sword, he made at me in the dark. I had no weapon but a little rapier and brace of pistols, nor dared I use these against him in his own garden. I leaped into a thicket of evergreens and Almira being between us, in attempting to follow, he fell over her, and I escaped without farther difficulty.

"I made haste to inform Perez of this unfortunate business, and, poor fellow, he was almost as much damped as myself. Poor Marta spoiled her pretty eyes with crying, as she must no more visit at the castle. I was within an ace of blowing my brains out at this unfortunate end of my exploit; but recollecting, few as I had, I could not put them in again, I thought better of it. I quit-
ted the cottage immediately, skulking about in the forest like a fox round an hen-roost, but not a soul from the castle made their appearance the first day.

"On the second morning, one of the men-servants passed along the path towards the river with a fishing net. "Halloo! Comrade," cried I: "I suppose you come from yon castle?" "Suppose I do," returned he sulkily, "I am no comrade of yours."—"Many a better man has that honor," said I. "Come, come, how goes all at the castle, Martin, and Gonzalez, and Hugo, and all the lasses?"

"Mighty familiar," muttered he, staring at me. "What's all this to you? I dont know you."

"You forget your old friend," said I; "I know you, and by the time you and I have finished this flask of aqua vitæ, we shall know each other. I once lived at the castle myself; it was before your time."—"No, did you?" cried he,

gaping; I have not been long there,"—"I know that," returned I, "or you would have known me. Come, I'll help you fish, I have a lucky hand at a haul; my father used to drag the net in the bay of Naples, and my mother cried the produce through the city." The fellow showed his large teeth, and clapping the flask to his mouth, I completely gained his heart.

"He informed me that Donna Almira was ill; that Don Padilla had given orders for a journey to Madrid in a few days, with intent to confine her in a convent, with the lady mother of which he was particularly acquainted.

"This intelligence was sufficient. I soon found an excuse to leave him to his fishing, and hastened to Tolosa, where I had left my horse. I thought very likely this story of his going to Madrid was only a feint, to conceal the true place where he meant to bury Almira; and being determined that he should not beat a march without pursuit, I waited several days in ambuscade for him. He set out at last, well mounted and armed; I followed upon the track, keeping so far in the rear as not to be discovered. He arrived in this city yesterday afternoon, and I should have been at night but my horse fell tired: and now, your Excellenza, I have only to ask your forgiveness of the blunders I have unintentionally committed."

The Marquis, at the conclusion of this story, could not but admire the zeal of his servant, which had undesignedly produced so unpleasant a consequence; and as it explained to him incidents and motives which had before perplexed him, he contented himself with cautioning Raolo, never to be guilty of a similar crime, it not being his place to judge what was fitting, or what was best, since all his conclusions must be drawn from the surface of things.

The Marquis of Denia, on this information, determined to postpone his visit to Count Potenza, where he ran the hazard of meeting Don Padilla:

he even thought it preferable that Antonio should make his court through the medium of that nobleman, without mentioning his connection with himself. He wished indeed for an interview with Almira, that he might speak of her sister; but he knew not how to effect this with security, as he had no doubt her father would guard her with unremitting vigilance.

In the evening Antonio did not fail visiting his friend. They took a walk together on the Prada, in hope that Almira might be there with some of the Count's family. In this they were disappointed, Don Padilla and the Count being in company.

"Now for a *coup de main*," said the Marquis of Denia: "we must not be seen here together, or my scheme will be frustrated.—Throw yourself in their way, you are acquainted with the Count, engage them, and detain them for an hour; I will hasten to the palace, and see if I can obtain an interview."

Antonio was charmed with this scheme, and wishing the Marquis success, in the next turn of the walk threw himself in the way of the Count and Padilla, addressing himself particularly to the former, while to the latter he was reservedly polite. The common subjects of the day were discussed: when observing a lady, whose air and manner had some slight resemblance to that of Almira, he inquired the Count's opinion of her; observing he thought her at a distance very much like the lady he had the honor of seeing the preceding evening at the Duke D'Alcantara's. "I think," said he to Don Padilla, "you called her your daughter; I may be mistaken."

"I know not," returned Don Padilla, in a forbidding manner, "that I said any thing about her: you have a better memory than I, Marquis."

"We always remember what interests us," replied Antonio, bowing. "Had that lady not been your daughter, I should have desired a further acquaintance."

“And why not as it is,” said the Count. “What objection have you to her as the daughter of Don Padilla?”

“Don Padilla may perhaps object to me,” said Antonio, watching his countenance. To which the Count replied gaily: “That is impossible. Come, come, let me introduce the Marquis Antonio de los Velos to Don Padilla, as his future son-in-law.”

“Never,” muttered Padilla, frowning.

“You must and shall alter your mind,” said the Count.

“How know you that?” returned Padilla, slowly. “Did you ever know me change the purpose I had determined? This business is settled.”

“But you would not surely refuse a handsome settlement for your daughter, and a gallant nobleman for your son? I should not have hesitated in giving Antonio any relation of mine, but unfortunately I have none marriageable of the female kind about me. My sister is rather too old, and has but one eye, and my daughters are not in their teens.”

“What you might do is no guide to me,” replied Padilla. “I have vowed that my daughter shall dedicate her life to the service of Heaven, and I consider the engagement as sacred.”

Antonio looked at him, as much as to say, and is Don Padilla become an observer of vows! The look was not unnoticed by a man like him, whose mind was tormented by every suspicion; and from that moment, he not only felt aversion, but endeavored to penetrate into the character and connections of Antonio, yet in a way that deceived the Count into a belief that his curiosity arose from a latent inclination to the connection. The Count began to enumerate so many qualities and qualifications, that Antonio, from modesty, was obliged to silence him; and, for the rest of the evening, more general subjects were discussed.

Antonio, who was impatient to learn the success of his friend, took leave when the evening began to close, and the company to thin; and the Count, on their return, recurring to their former discourse, endeavored to persuade Padilla into a change of opinion, but without effect, to the no little astonishment of Count Potenza, who began to suspect that there must be a great and a secret reason for the refusal of an offer so every way unobjectionable.

The Marquis of Denia hastened to the palace of Count Potenza, he was admitted by the servants without question, being well known, and hastened to pay his respects to the Count's sister, Lady Bertha, with whom he found, as he expected, Donna Almira. She blushed at his unexpected entrance, but had sufficient presence of mind to check the particular questions he was going to address to herself by a signal for his silence. Lady Bertha being blind of one eye, they conversed at intervals by signs, the Marquis urging her to allow him a moment's audience in private which she seemed afraid to grant, as her father might suddenly return.

"Don't you think it a great pity, Marquis," said Donna Bertha, "that so fine a young lady should be condemned to a cloister?"

"Not only a pity," cried the Marquis, warmly, "but the most unpardonable cruelty. I cannot think Heaven well served, by a vow against the first commands of God to man."

"You think exactly as I do," said Donna Bertha. "I was telling Don Padilla but this afternoon all that I thought on the subject, and I told him also that I thought he refined upon his barbarity, by just allowing his daughter to taste, for a moment, the pleasures of existence, purposely to deprive her of them forever. He replied, she would not be able to pray from her heart against the temptations of life, if she had not some little knowledge of what they were."

"His motive is now very clear," said the Marquis, looking at Almira; but how shall it be frustrated?"

"Make her your wife," said Lady Bertha, rising up abruptly; "I shall leave you to settle the terms." On which, without further ceremony, she quitted the room, having no doubt observed that the Marquis and Almira were much better acquainted than they seemed willing should be known.

"This is beyond my hopes, my charming cousin," cried the Marquis, starting up and saluting her. "Last night I dared not make a single inquiry lest I should betray myself. Now tell me all that I can have interest in knowing. Tell me what were the consequences of the blunders of Raulo? Tell me, if Virginia yet remembers me?"

"She has not forgot you," replied Almira, "however painful it may be to remember those whom we can never hope to see. But you say nothing about Fernando, Marquis! What is become of your friend?"

"I know not," replied the Marquis; "I have not heard from him for many months; but I have another friend equally dear, who does justice to your merits; let him supply to you, as he does to me, the friend we have lost; let him even be more, for you know, my dear cousin, Fernando was not what you wished him to be."

"I understand you," said Almira, blushing and sighing: "I suppose you mean that young man who rescued me from the flames last night. I acknowledge that gratitude obliges me to esteem him. There was something in his manner that affected me, probably from my ignorance of the world; and I confess I could have-wished him for a brother, to share our confinement in the castle. But now Albert, that is over: I am condemned to that state for which I am most unfit. If to me the dreariness of the castle of Montillo was insufferable."

ble, how much more so will be the routine of a convent, and that convent the Dominican nuns?"

"Don Padilla is not cruel by halves!" exclaimed the Marquis. "But is there no means to rescue you from this fate?"

"Alas! no. My father has sworn by the most fearful oaths. His temper has, if possible been a thousand times more gloomy. He is, at times, I do think, actually mad.—My sister trembles for her life, and I know not, when I am away, what will become of her."

"I swear," cried the Marquis, glowing with resentment; "I swear by every thing sacred, I will protect her." Then taking her hand, he lowered his voice, he said: "Let my friend, Antonio de los Velos, also protect you. He will fly at a word to lay himself, his life, and his fortune at your feet—"

"Hold," said Almira; "do not speak thus to me. You rend my heart.—Ah, Marquis, what sacrifice would I not make to avoid a greater. Fernando—"

"Cannot be yours," said the Marquis, tenderly. "Dearest Almira, you would not wish the hand of a man who has no heart to dispose of, if he even lives."

"I know, I know," cried she, passionately, "your friend always treated me with indifference. I see too plainly I must take the detested veil."

The Marquis smiled.—"Think better of it," said he, "an handsome young nobleman, with a considerable revenue, must outweigh a rosary and a crucifix. A little time will probably bring you to my way of reasoning, and, at worst, you have a year's probation before you perform the vows. In twelve months, my cousin, how many greater changes will happen than the alteration of a lady's mind. Now let us speak of your sister."

He was interrupted by the return of the Count's sister, who significantly inquired if Almira was to be a nun.

"I fear it, indeed," replied the Marquis, "unless you can persuade her there are more charms in a nobleman's palace than a convent."

"I shall scarcely have time," replied she, "before the return of my brother; it is already near nine o'clock."

"So late!" cried the Marquis, starting up, "I have already taken two hours instead of one."

The Marquis hastened away, admiring on what contrivance Antonio could have fallen to hold them so late. He had not been gone many minutes when the Count and Don Padilla returned.

"We have met with a lover for you in our ramble," said the Count to Almira (Don Padilla being engaged at the window); "but I know not how we shall bring the business to bear."

"Don't give yourself any concern," replied his sister. "We have had one lover here ourselves, so you may abandon yours to a forlorn hope."

"May I know who that is?" inquired the Count.

"We must barter for an exchange of secrets at least," answered she; "but Almira, have I your permission?"

"Nay," returned Almira in a low voice, and a look of alarmed apprehension, "you have gone too far to require it, but the Marquis is no lover of mine, indeed."

"Why that *indeed*?" said the Count laughing; "I can answer for the Marquis that he is, he told me so himself this very evening. He even made proposals to your father, and it is not a quarter of an hour since he left us."

Donna Bertha could scarce refrain from laughing out. "You would not," said she, "persuade me I have neither eyes nor ears, the Marquis de Denia has been with us more than two hours, and it is but this moment—"

"The Marquis de Denia!" cried Don Padilla, turning round in anger—"Has the Marquis de Denia dared!—but how came you, Almira—Was you not aware of my detestation; my utter and inextinguishable hatred? Death and fury! Am I to be thwarted at every turn by this wretch? But

I will some day have revenge. Count, I beg your pardon : my passions are sometimes too much for my discretion. Almira, I will be obeyed—prepare this very night for the convent.”

“Hold a moment,” cried the Count: “this is a very foolish business. The Marquis came as a visitor to me, your daughter denies his being a lover of hers, and my sister declares what she said was in raillery.”

“I know better, I know better,” repeated the enraged Padilla, as he stalked about the room with a distorted countenance. “That wretch crosses me at every turn, but it is my own fault; I am a fool, a child, thus to trifle.”

Amidst these exclamations, he suddenly recollected their impolicy, and shrinking into his usual gloominess, he spent the rest of the evening in sullen silence, firmly determined that on the next day his daughter should begin her novitiate.

Antonio hastened from the Prada to meet his friend, when their mutual success was related, and future plans discussed, without any positive arrangement. “I am going, to-night,” said Antonio, “to treat her with a Serenade. I have provided music, and the words are from an old Spanish romance. I have a tolerable voice, and will sing them to a guitar if you will accompany me.”

To this the Marquis made no objection; but, having need of repose, he lay down for an hour to rest. He was awakened by his impatient friend about eleven o’clock, who, having provided an excellent band of musicians, Raolo and Philip, Antonio’s servant, attended them well armed, nothing being more common than rencounters in the streets from the jealousy or mistakes of lovers.

They were not long in reaching the palace of the Count Potenza, where, having taken their station, the musicians preluded with a symphony, which ceasing, Antonia sung the following air, accompanied by his friend.

SERENADE.

Art thou awake, or art thou sleeping,
Love may attack thee, Lady Fair?
Where is the heart so safe in keeping,
As to elude the secret snare?
Cupid, a wanton, slyly enters,
Sometimes the eye, sometimes the ear:
Boldly to gilded domes he ventures,
Wrapp'd in the garb of bashful fear.

SYMPHONY.

Rise thee, and hear me, Lady Fair.

Then, dearest maid, be not disdaining,
That power the proudest once must feel;
List to an heart whose fond complaining,
Love's brightest passion would reveal.
Then again close thine eyes in slumbers—
Should Love perchance invade thy breast,
Music attuned to softest numbers,
Shall sooth thy mind to sweetest rest.

SYMPHONY.

Rise thee, and hear me, Lady Fair.

After an interval of silence, they again performed the same air: but Almira not appearing at the lattice, they were obliged to retire without the satisfaction of knowing she had heard them, though of that there could be little doubt. Their company was too numerous to dread any common attack, and they returned in safety to the palace of the Marquis of Denia.

Antonio, early the following day, sent a present of the finest fruit Madrid could produce, accompanied with a note of respectful compliments to Padilla; but he was deaf alike to interest, to reason, and to nature.

CHAPTER XII.

Thrice blessed they that master so their blood,
To undergo such maiden pilgrimage!
But earthlier happy is the rose distilled,
Than that which withering on the virgin thorn,
Grows, lives, and dies in single blessedness.

Shakspeare.

EARLY in the morning Don Padilla conducted his daughter to the Convent of Dominican Nuns, with a severe charge to the Lady Mother of the foundation, that she should not permit any stranger to see, much less to hold correspondence with his daughter. It was his knowledge of her severe and inflexible disposition which caused him to select her house from that of many others in more eligible situations; he knew the mother, St. Agatha, would measure out to those around her, that portion she herself had partaken: having been dragged from the arms of a favored lover in the prime of her life, and buried within those barren and unpitying walls: in place of learning from them to commiserate the woes of others, from a wrong turn in her disposition, arose an inveterate hatred against any who presumed to aspire to greater pleasures than she had experienced, and she considered the exercise of her power as a just retaliation upon fortune.

Under such a superior Almira could expect no indulgence; and when the gate which barred her from the world closed upon her, she wished again to have had the old castle to ramble over, with her sister Virginia to share in her conversation, and to plan some little scheme of innocent amusement. The narrow gloomy cloisters were even more solitary than the heavy gothic galleries of the castle of Montillo, and the emblems of religion inspired more reverential awe than the relics of martial grandeur.

Almira was of that disposition which wishes for some companion to share the pleasures of friendship; her heart was too gay for those solitary scenes of endless monotony, and the night which had first introduced her to an assembly, obliterated, in a few moments, the reflection of what had brought her to Madrid. This fairy scene was as transient as it was bright; she felt (as her father had intended) in greater force the misery of her situation.

She had placed her affections, at a first acquaintance, with her cousin Fernando, not from any motive of comparative preference, but because he had been the only young man with whom she had been in any way familiar; and his coolness and indifference, perhaps augmented the flame.

In the habitation of piety, she looked round in vain for a sister open and candid as herself; for a bosom that might share her confidence in the purity of female love. All here were cold and repulsive. Music indeed warbled on their lips, but charity had no abode in their hearts. Sins long since committed rankled with corrosive violence on minds which no other occupation could divert from reflection. Regret and unmeaning repentance soured the disposition of those who had too late discovered that they had chosen wrong; and a few, very few, tasted the inebriating cup of enthusiastic religion, which enabled to look with indifference upon the contrasting gaiety of the world that surrounded them.

Almira secluded herself as much as she could with propriety in her own cell; where she could not avoid repining at the harshness of her lot; and in place of breathing petitions to Heaven for grace to adopt and become the habit, she daily uttered wishes at the foot of the altar that Fernando, or even the Marquis de los Velos, might find means to rescue her. The routine of religious ceremony was but a partial amusement, and could not relieve her mind from its weight of overbearing sad-

ness. It even augmented her serious reflections, and she found herself fast approaching to that apathy which arises from universal disgust.

Amongst the sisterhood Almira could distinguish no friend, but amongst the borders was a young lady, whose name was Saphira, whose innocent conversation and lively remarks engaged her attention; and though her years (being scarcely sixteen) admitted not of unbounded confidence, yet her company was amusement and pleasure.

They read together, but it was the dry uninviting morality of the fathers. They sung together, but it was hymns and religious airs. They rambled together in the garden; but it was in a garden where every object reminded them of mortality, and every step might be supposed to pass over the mouldering bones of some departed friend. Melancholy yews and solemn cypresses formed the alleys; no flower of variegated hue, or brilliant appearance, was admitted into this sanctuary; and which ever way the eye turned sadness and silence seemed to sit brooding upon death. The termination of the walk opened not upon a beautiful vista, or capacious temple; a shade of impenetrable twilight mingled them in confusion, as though the glorious beams of the sun were too gay for admission, where mistaken piety had placed her abode.

The garden, dreary as it was, was preferable to the interior of the building, where shade spread its gloom at noon day, and pale figures in long white robes, with black veils and black girdles, glided through the galleries and cloisters like inhabitants of a spiritual world. Almira discovered with surprise, that even in these abodes of supposed tranquility, where the passions of the heart should have been charmed into slumber, discord and ambition had extended their influence, and occupied in the bosoms of too many the place of devotion.

The Abbess was in the decline of life, and the senior sisters each had a view to the succession,

which created parties and cabals within the walls, as inveterate, perhaps, as those of the different colors in ancient history. Almira was yet too insignificant to be courted by either any further than for her opinion, whether Mother Urbania was not more preferable than Mother Isola? Such questions, which to her inspired no interest, and to which she was wholly indifferent, she declined with delicacy, observing that it was not for her who had so recently entered the society to form a judgment of her superiors. Saphira was equally uninterested; but even her youthful observations pointed against the folly and eagerness of women, and these women far advanced in life, aspiring to the transient shadow of power, when it was almost an equal chance whether themselves might not first become inhabitants of the grave.

"There must be something sweet in the possession of power," said Almira one day to her young hearer, "or why should these old ladies grasp at its possession with so much violence: for my part I should like to be the queen of some flowery island, guarded round with high walls, that might defend it alike from enemies and the attacks of the ocean. I would have all my subjects beautiful and peaceful, and I would dispense to them every blessing in my power to bestow. I would have fine palaces, fine gardens, elegant entertainment of music and dancing, and the whole kingdom should be a little paradise of enchantment."

"But who," said Saphira, innocently, "would you have to build all your palaces, perform on your music, or work in your kitchen?"

"That is true," replied Almira, "nothing can be performed without labor, and where there is labor there will be discontent, and where there is no labor there will be heart-burning and jealousy about insignificant trifles, such as gangrenes the real pleasures of contemplation within these walls; walls, which would otherwise hold out an asylum, much to be prized by those who have been

unfortunate, who have lost all their friends, or who are weary of the world."

"And I think," said Saphira, "one must be all these before they can admire and love these gloomy little chambers, and these moping nuns. For my part, when I am obliged to go along these dark galleries by myself, I am almost afraid some spectre will start upon me from the obscurity, for one can neither see before or behind, it is exactly like a fog of twilight mist."

Almira, in company with this young friend, endeavored to soften down the rigors of solitude, but she could not suppress the repinings of her heart. Fernando's indifference accounted for his long silence; but the same excuse did not exculpate the Marquis de los Velos: he, who pretended to be deeply enamored, could yet suffer days and weeks to pass away without so much as one visit, or the smallest token of remembrance. She was ignorant of the restriction placed upon her, which prevented her receiving any message, visitor, or letter, and she knew not the ineffectual devices of Antonio to gain admission: her mind began to be dimmed by the gloom around it, and hopeless dejection saddened her thoughts.

Her little companion, who, till the death of her parents, had been habituated to all the splendor and vivacity of the world, was even more affected than Almira by the contrast. Her mind insensibly imbibed all the terrors which strict religious discipline, when united with bigotry, is calculated to inspire. Her sprightly temper lost its tone: her mind became the prey of fictitious horrors, and all her thoughts turned upon futurity. The friendly discourses of Almira by degrees became irksome, and, like a vitiated taste, nothing could give her pleasure that did not lead to the general subject of her conversation. For whole days she would ramble in the darkest recesses of the garden, and she soon became so changed, that neither her sentiments nor her person could have been

known for the same, after a confinement of less than three months. Her mind had not had sufficient experience to preserve its tone; it sunk beneath the awful ceremonies and melancholy duties of a convent. Her health decayed, and it was with extreme affliction Almira beheld this lovely girl sinking fast into the grave.

She endeavored to divert her mind with more lively prospects; she attended her with an affectionate interest which deprived herself of rest, and she mourned over her as a blighted flower withering before its perfections were fully disclosed.

It is impossible to be perpetually in any company without imbibing, insensibly, the sentiments of that company, whether they be vicious or whether they be good: so Almira found that the constant habit of attending the innocent Saphira, arrested and fixed her own mind upon the awful mysteries of religion, which, added to the daily lectures they attended, were calculated to fill her mind with indifference for life, and incline it to adopt the manners, and become less repugnant to the idea of taking the irrevocable vow.

She attended with more fervor the services of the church, when she quitted the couch of sickness: she felt not so much aversion to her lot, and there were times when she even thought that if Saphira could remain as her companion, she should not feel much reluctance at renouncing for ever the vanities of a transient life. Of this there were no hopes, for the sun never arose without witnessing some alteration or decay in her friend's person, and she looked forward with painful anxiety to the short period which would terminate her transient existence upon earth.

Saphira was conscious of her approaching dissolution, and beheld it with pleasure. "My dear friend," said she one evening, as Almira sat by the side of her bed, "wherefore do you weep? I feel something within me that says we shall soon meet again. Do you not remember the toys you

so admired when a baby, the fondness you professed for them? and did you not think you could never part from them? But as you grew up, how insignificant they became in your eyes, and you then threw them away as worthless trifles.—Just so the soul learns to despise this world, as it gains a knowledge of the future.”

Saphira shortly declined beyond the powers of medicine, and Almira, while she beheld her, frequently shed tears, reflecting that but a very little time would go over them, ere those polished limbs would become flaccid, ere those eyes would cease to convey impressions of intelligence; and that voice, harmonious as music, be silent for ever. “O, death!” cried she, as she sat on the little coarse bed in the narrow dark chamber: “O, remorseless death! thou tearest asunder all the connections of love, family, and friendship. Thou solemn ambassador of futurity, no bribe can turn thee from thy purpose, no consideration stay thine hand.”

A deep sigh caught her attention; she started, and looked fearfully round. Saphira had fallen into a feverish slumber, and her sighs arose more from bodily oppression than the thoughts of her mind. For two days she continued to linger, every hour apparently at the last extremity; and on the third she breathed her last in the arms of her weeping friend.

Almira was inconsolable at this event, though so long expected. She threw herself upon the corpse of the departed maid, and gave way to an agony of tears which relieved her heart. This was the first friend she had ever lost by death, and she had difficulty to believe, though reason confirmed it, that she was, indeed, gone forever. It seemed so incredible, that without any external violence or struggle, the principle of existence should depart its abode, and she gazed with earnest anxiety expecting that those lips might again if but for once more, pronounce some endearing sentence of affection.

At last she unwillingly withdrew, being unable to attend the last offices of friendship; and throwing herself upon a chair in her own little chamber, she remained, for a long time, in a reverie of grief which clouded her understanding, and, for a time, rendered life indifferent.

A young lady, whose name was Valedia, had been received as boarder the day preceding this melancholy event. She was related to many noble families: the liveliness of her temper engaged the hearts of her friends, and it was with surprise they saw her adopt a resolution so unfit for the sociability of her manners. The affection Almira bore towards the dying saint was amongst the first subjects of conversation, and she possessed an earnest desire to become acquainted with a character which she conceived to resemble her own. She refrained breaking in upon the sacredness of grief; but when the first transports of passionate affection had subsided, she introduced herself to the cell of Almira, whose mind could not resist the tone of her conversation, and from that moment an attraction acted mutually between them. She seemed to Almira as sent by Heaven at a moment when she most required a confidant and friend, and the one listened while the other related the merits of the departed Saphira.

That young lady had been a general favorite in the convent: her birth was high, her connections great, and her youth deprived jealousy of its sting. All the nuns lamented her loss, and celebrated her virtues as a saint, preparing to solemnise her obsequies in a manner at once grand and impressive.

Almira and Valedia prepared to attend this ceremony.

On the fourth night after her death the sisters, all clad in white, with black crape veils down to the ground, and black girdles, repaired to the church of the convent, which was illuminated with tapers. The altar was hung with black, and the

vaults were open in the body of the church. The novices, dressed in white, bore the coffin with the body of their sister, and the Father Confessor chanted before them the solemn service.

The monks who attended the duties of the convent were habited in black, and ranged themselves on each side beneath the steps of the altar. When the whole were seated, a solemn mass was performed for the repose of the dead.

Almira was too much affected to bear an active part, and sat down on one side leaning upon the bosom of Valedia. From the deep grief which seized her mind at the solemnity around her, she aroused to thoughts above earthly things, by the performance of a grand Anthem and Requiem. It was opened by a mournful dirge upon the organ, when the monks and nuns alternately, or in chorus performed the following

REQUIEM.

SOLO—*By a Nun, accompanied by a mournful Symphony.*

Vain are our cares, vain our fears
Or hoping of to-morrow;
Man through this transient term of years,
Is still the child of sorrow.

The wav'ring breath of human life,
As burns awhile the taper,
So shines midst want, and pain, and strife,
Then vanishes in vapor.

Say, what is man, that he should be
By Heaven's Most High rewarded?
Or how, from vice and sin set free.
With future life rewarded?

RESPONSE—SOLO, *by a Monk.*

He who for human nature died,
In mercy will forgive;
And those who in his power confide,
Shall in his glory live.

CHORUS.

Then raise the lofty organ's note
Peal on peal, resounding high;
Strains that up to heaven may float,
And wake the concord of the sky:
Then louder, louder, louder sing,
Hosannas to our God and King.

SOLO.

Ye gates cerulean backwards fly,
Ye everlasting doors give way,
She comes—a daughter of the sky,
And strains celestial round her play.

CHANT *to the VIRGIN.*

Receive, O Virgin, mother of mankind
This sainted daughter to thy holy rest;
To thee her spotless spirit is consign'd,
To thee she comes a meek and peaceful guest

On earth awhile she bloom'd a fragrant flow'r,
No roughen'd thought disturb'd her tranquil
mind,
But soon elapsed of life her fading hour
She fled, and left mortality behind.

Ye sister angels, bending down to hear
The song of glory, which we feebly raise,
Benignant smile as with a list'ning ear
Ye catch the tribute of our partial praise.

TRIO.

No more will we on earth repine,
 A sister mild, a friend sincere;
 In worlds of glory shall she shine,
 Where crimes ne'er move the secret tear.

Angelic spirits, glad prepare
 Robes of white and spotless shade,
 On untextured pinions bear
 The spirit of this happy maid.

RECITATIVE.

To Paradisal bow'rs for ever green,
 Where palm-trees blooming cool the fervid ray;
 And blazing glory, through the sacred scene,
 Sheds splendid grandeur in eternal day.

There saints and seraphs, near the living streams
 Of flowing fountains, ever mild and pure;
 In smiling visions, or in grateful themes,
 Praise Him, who was, and ever shall endure.

GRAND CHORUS.

Loud, loud hallelujahs, ascending on high,
 Archangels and seraphs, enraptur'd, reply
 In chorus, still rising, that never knows end,
 Loud, loud hallelujahs for ever ascend.

The winding up of the last chorus was inexpressibly grand. The body of harmony seemed to fill every part of this extensive building: and Almira forgot, in the rapture of sound, and the ideas of eternal glory it inspired, all the particular griefs which hung upon her soul. She had given wings to her imagination, and trod in fancy unimpeded through the starry firmament, mingling with bright

aerial spirits in the ineffable pleasure of supernal delight.

From this delirium of soul she gradually recovered as the sounds died away, and the notes ceased to vibrate along the aisles of the church; but it enabled her to attend with calmness to the last offices to be performed. The whole company descended the gloomy stairs into the vaults, the organ continuing a slow movement, till the tones were wholly lost in the silence of the tombs.

The dim tapers sparkled through the gloom, scarcely bringing to light the rows of mouldering coffins which hung with yellow clammy dew, while from the arched roof distilled petrefactive drops. The timid nuns cast many a fearful glance upon this last abode, where each knew some future hour would bring themselves; and they secretly seemed to say: "There, or there, must I lay: there must I moulder into dust, and there remain till the final consummation of all things."

The coffin was placed by the side of many others, and left a vacancy for one upon the top of it. "There," said Almira to Valedia, "there, upon the *house* of my friend, let me be placed." She shuddered at the dismal prospect. "No one can tell," said she, "how soon I may be there, left in total darkness, and lost to self-consciousness."

As the sad procession returned, the nuns cast many a fearful glance of inquiry behind them, pale and trembling at the reflected shadows which crept along the wall, and stretched over the coffins. Each stole silently to their cell, to meditate on the things they had witnessed; and for that night the machinations of jealousy and ambition were unattended.

Almira bade her new friend good night, and placed her lamp at the foot of her crucifix, where an hour-glass stood that was now run out. She turned it, and sat down in a chair opposite, gazing upon the sand as it ran, till her mind was bewildered in melancholy fancies. The last grain fell, and

she was again turning the glass when she heard, or fancied she heard, soft and solemn music steal upon her ear through the stillness of night. She listened. The sounds swelled clearly along the passing air.

"It is then no fancy," thought she; "it is not the embodied vibration of the anthem returning upon my ear; it is as a symphony of spirits in the air; and who knows but my Saphira is greeting me with the music of her companions." In a little time the sounds melted into air, sinking into a tone that could scarcely be caught, when a voice clearly and softly pronounced the name of Almira. She started up, and opened the door into the corridor, but no one was near. With a sensation of awe she closed it again, and solemnly placed herself before the crucifix. Again the voice whispered Almira, and she looked round with straining eyes. The lamp before the crucifix glimmered and died away, and all around remained dark and profoundly silent. Again the music arose, and swelled in numbers so sweet and so divine, that fear charmed into pleasure. A gradual light imperceptibly shone in the chamber, increasing into brightness, and a form of smiling and lovely beauty by degrees became visible. Streaming robes of azure and white played around the form in alternate foldings, spangled with shining stars like various gems. A golden crown of beamy fire mingled with the waving of air, and the countenance expressed more than mortal beauty and benignity.

Almira was entranced with astonishment and delight. Under this angelic figuration it was some time before she recollected the features of her recent friend: but how much more lovely were they tinctured with all the nobility of celestial perfection. She gazed upon her without the power of utterance, and a tear of delight swam in her eye.

Saphira motioned with her hand.—"My friend," said she, with a smiling countenance, "such as I am, you will quickly be. Prepare,

Almira, nine days and you will go hence." She waved her hand in token of friendship, and smiling, gradually faded from sight. The music floated in the air, the celestial radiance mingled with the darkness, and in a few minutes the lamp again burnt bright, and the sounds were wholly lost to the ear.

"Do I dream," said Almira to herself, "or is this vision real? Can it be true that disembodied spirits are ever permitted to appear as a consolation, or warning to their friends; but to me! How unworthy am I of so high honor." The solemn mandate which had accompanied this appearance impressed her mind with belief, and she shuddered to think that with all her imperfections unrepented, and her wishes unweaned, she should so soon be summoned from the things of life. She had already been near three months in the convent, months which had passed away with the tedium of years. She received no letters from her sister, nor any visits from her father: and indeed she was ignorant whether he had returned to the castle, or whether he remained in Madrid.

The more Almira mused upon the prediction of her fate, the less able was she to determine upon its import. The shortness of the time appeared to her to preclude accident, or the decay of her health. What accident indeed could happen to her within impenetrable walls. She was sometimes ready to interpret in a literal sense the words—*You will go hence*: but it was beyond her hope that she should be freed from the convent. She forbore mentioning to Valedia the singular appearance she had witnessed.

The conversation of Valedia was happily adapted to relieve the mind from sadness. It was by turns lively or serious, and formed itself to the disposition of the hour. Her attachment to Almira seemed every moment to increase, and she frequently hinted a wish of mutual confidence.

"Is not mine," said she the second evening af-

ter the funeral of Saphira, "a singular fate? You will wonder when I tell you this place is at once my aversion and my choice."

"That is singular," replied Almira; "to me it appeared at first as a prison, but custom has so far reconciled me, that I find it possible to live. My thoughts it is true, perpetually recur to my sister Virginia, and the gay liberties of my early youth. But why, my dear, should you make this place your choice if you were free to will otherwise?"

"Do you know I am an impostor," said Valedia with a smile: I have pretended ignorance to you, but I am well acquainted with your connections from the mouth of my cousin Antonio de los Velos. You start, my dear, but be assured I am not dangerous. I know also the Marquis de Denia, and the adventre which introduced him to your acquaintance."

Almira, with a hesitating voice, inquired if she knew also the Marquis's friend, Fernando de Cello?"

Valedia sighed deeply, and gazed upon Almira with an earnestness which seemed to seek into her thoughts. "Yes, Almira," said she, "I think—I know I may trust you. Without confidence, there can be no friendship; and though a lover will divide the greatest attachments, yet when that lover is no more, the knowledge of a mutual admiration only cements affection."

"You speak to me in enigmas," said Almira.

"Then I will explain myself," returned Valedia, gently laying her hand upon Almira's arm. "You have been in love, my dear, so have I; but the object of our choice is for ever lost to us both, and I have here resolved to mourn away my days." "Is Fernando dead?" murmured Almira: then breaking into tears they sunk for some time, into each other's arms. "If he is dead," said Almira, recovering, "I have no longer reason to desire to live: I will take the vows with you."

"Not so," replied Valedia. "You have many

reasons to desire a better fortune. The Marquis de los Velos is deeply in love with you. He is an elegant and accomplished nobleman, and such as few of our sex would refuse. I know, Almira, that your love of Fernando can be little more than inclination cherished by solitude and thinking constantly on one object. He was in your company but very few days, while with me he passed the years of his youth. The father of Antonio was his guardian after the death of his own parents, and I may say I loved him from the earliest hour of my memory. To an impartial eye de los Velos is preferable: and when you remember he will liberate you from this prison, place you in the most elegant circles of Madrid, and render you mistress of his actions, you will be either less or more than woman to refuse him."

"Were such an offer made to you, would you accept it?" said Almira.

"I think that I would under the same circumstances," answered Valedia.

"But, my dear," returned Almira, wiping the tears from her eyes, "the duty I owe to my father is sacred; were I to fly from this place without his consent, I should fear some terrible judgment would overtake me."

"I see," said Valedia with a smile, "you are already initiated into the superstitions of this place: but ask yourself if there are no bounds to this authority you dread? Can a parent have a right to imprison or to destroy their offspring from wanton whim or caprice? Surely no: and as surely it is a duty incumbent on yourself to fly such abuse of power."

Discourses like these, on repetition, gained upon the mind of Almira, which was naturally inclined to pleasure, though her late connection with Saphira, had much decreased the desires of her heart. Valedia was artful, though virtuous. She had a wish to serve her cousin Antonio, and a latent desire of suppressing a rival, should Fernan-

do ever return, which she herself distantly hoped. She painted to Almira all the gay scenes of life in which she had herself figured, and suggested so many schemes of happiness within her grasp, that Almira again began to repine at solitude, and to reflect upon the offers of Antonio.

On the following day Valedia was called to the grate, a privilege Almira was wholly denied. In about half an hour she returned, with a letter in her bosom, which she presented to Almira, saying with a smile—"It was Antonio, as I suspected. It was with difficulty I took charge of this billet : I must never have gone to the grate again. I was afraid she would think my cousin was making love to me, he spoke so earnest and so tenderly. Seriously, my friend, if you reject him, I shall not think you a woman."

"But how can I accept the hand of a man, for whom I have no higher regard than esteem," said Almira, looking at the seal on the letter.

"That is his business," replied Valedia, laughing; break that charm, and read the contents of the magic scroll."

The letter breathed the most ardent sentiments of love, and earnestly pressed for a favorable reply, in the name of her sister and the Marquis of Denia. He said many things to assure her he required no more than the strictest duty might approve, and strongly contrasted the prospects of felicity they might enjoy with the cold and barren employments of a monastery, to which her father condemned her for life.

These arguments could not but fall with weight upon Almira. She reflected that her cousin had never returned her attentions; he was now lost for ever; and she hesitated about the answer she should return. "Let it be a consenting negative," said Valedia. "If he should change his mind and fancy me, it would then be too late for you to repent."

“I should witness that event with pleasure,” replied Almira. “If you have any wish, I will give him a final denial; for to tell you the inmost feelings of my heart, I find a sort of lingering desire after gayer scenes and worldly pleasures, yet so mingled with indifference, that I compel myself, reluctantly to accept them. I am unable to express the compound sensations that I feel; something seems to hang upon my spirits, as if I was not my own agent; and I may compare myself to a vessel in a stream, without a rudder, sail, or oar, which, with the returning tide, feels an equal impulse, and follows at last the most powerful external force.”

“You draw your distinctions too finely to be very happy,” said Valedia. “In this life, we ought never to feel too acutely either pleasures or pain; and yet for myself, I never could arrive at the dull medium so necessary if we would glide easily through the world; and we are now growing melancholy, when our prospects are brighter we will plan an answer to this letter, and trust the event to that superior power which controls all things.”

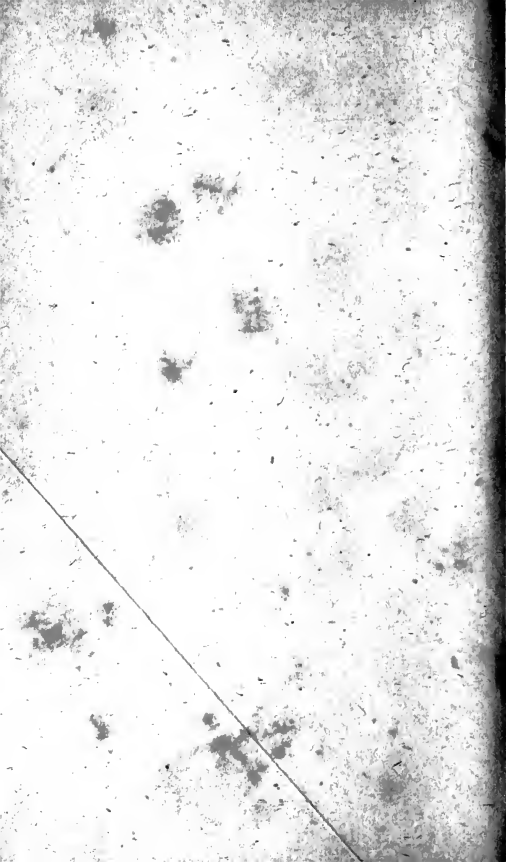
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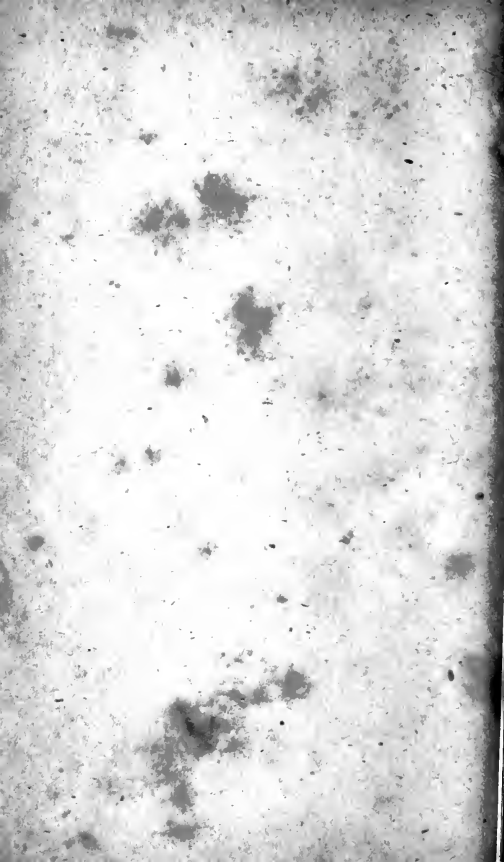


















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